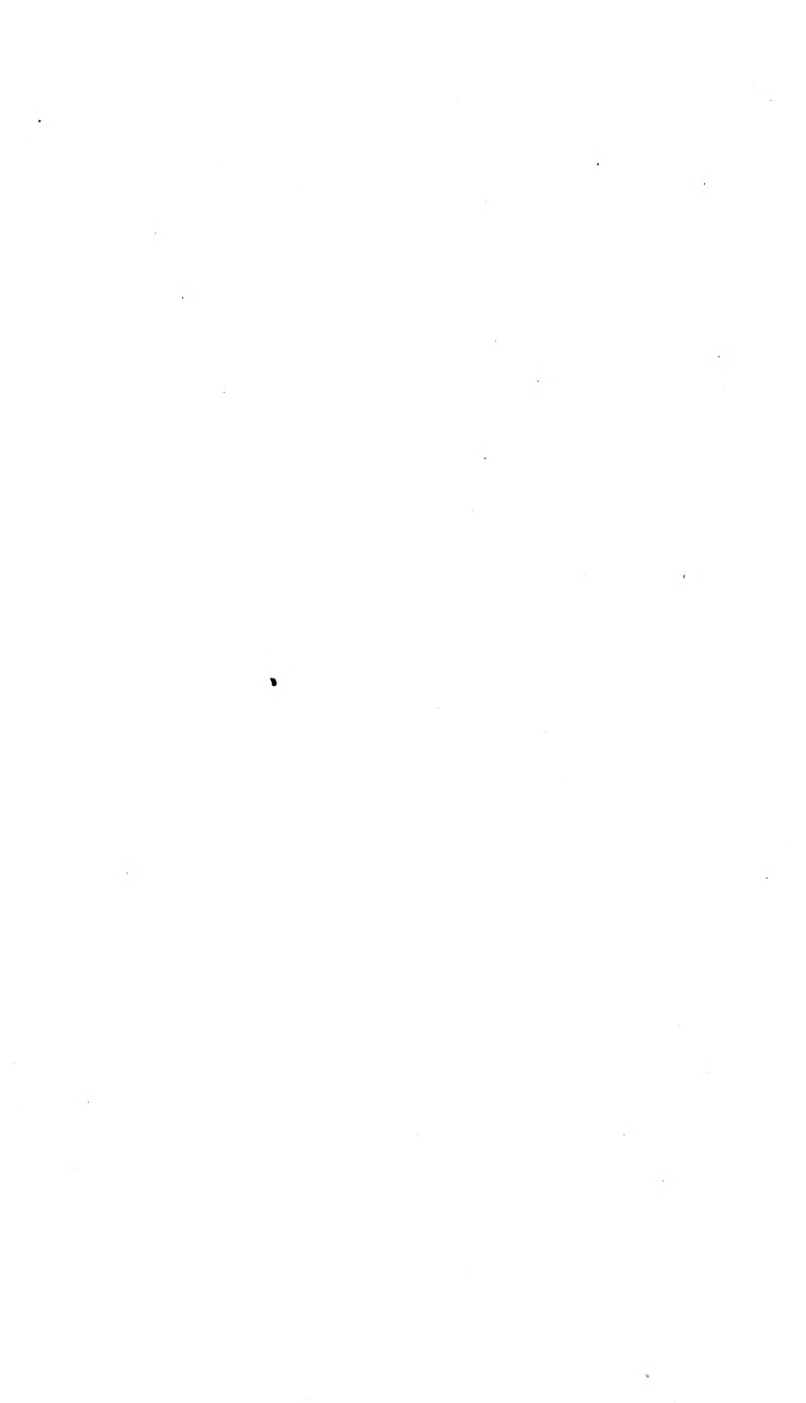




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A L L A N B R E C K.



VOL. I.

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Allen Breck

ALLAN BRECK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE SUBALTERN,” “COUNTRY CURATE,” &c.

—This man's brow, like to a title-page,
Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
(SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.)

1834.



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ALLAN BRECK.

CHAPTER I.

ALONG the farther shore of one of those salt water lochs, or arms of the sea, by which the west coast of Scotland is frequently indented, lies a tract of country, which some half a dozen centuries ago became, by right of conquest, the property of Alister Mac Diarmid and his war-like followers. The district in question, though not wanting in straths and glens, consists principally of mountain ranges which fall short, in point both of altitude and barren grandeur, to none throughout the compass of the High-

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lands. Towards the head of the loch, indeed, hill seems to have been piled upon hill by some extraordinary convulsion of nature; rocks towering high into the air, without a blade of grass or a slip of heather to cover them; while here and there, from some rift or crevice in their foundation, a mountain ash juts forth, as if for the purpose of proving how little soil is required in the nourishment of that hardy plant. As you descend in the direction of the Irish channel, however, new and varied scenery meets you at every step. A narrow path along the margin of the water, now shooting straight onwards with the precision of an arrow's flight, now twisting and turning, as little bays and creeks pierce into the hill's side, opens out, from time to time, glimpses of a panorama, to convey any accurate idea of which the power of language is wholly inadequate. On your left rise sheer and abrupt mountains, from whose rocky and precipitous summits the snow has seldom disappeared; though to the

extent of more than half their altitude, a luxuriant coat of turf overspreads them, beautifully diversified by the feathery plumage of a low and scraggy underwood. On your right the broad and deep loch, with its islands and promontories, seems, in spite of the ebb and flow of the tide, to repose within a giant basin; around which, on every side, mountains close in, peaked and pyramidal, or broad, jagged, and ponderous. The whole scene, indeed, exhibits Nature in her wildest and most magnificent aspect; for there is not a feature in it that fails to carry the imagination back to the time when chaos first began to give place to order throughout the world.

The stranger who visits this Alpine district in the year 1833, will discover in it more to attract his notice than nature unassisted could produce. The shores of the loch re-echo to the voices of an industrious population, while its surface is from time to time whitened with the sails of numerous boats and vessels of a

larger size. Numerous farm-houses, too, scattered through the glens, with a village spread over the base of the hill, give proof that the spirit of enterprize has been here producing its customary result—an increase of comforts; whether purchased at too high a price, it is not for us to determine. But at the period to which our present history has reference, a widely different state of things prevailed. No village was then in existence, nor were the open spaces covered, as they are now, with marks of human industry. It seemed, on the contrary, as if war had lately ravaged the district, of which the effects were still to be traced in ruined homesteads, and cottages levelled with the earth; while the perfect solitude that prevailed in every direction, led to the unavoidable conclusion, that the inhabitants had removed from their ancient homes in search of some more secure retreat elsewhere.

From the head of the loch, to a remarkable promontory, which giving a new direction to

the tide, confers a new name upon the sheet of water, there is a space of perhaps some fifteen or twenty miles. Throughout the whole of that interval there were but two spots, and these far apart, from which, in the year 1745, a wreath of smoke was ever seen to ascend; in such quantities at least, as to lead to the conclusion that there the rites of hospitality were exercised. Upon the promontory itself, or rather upon a sort of table-land, which almost at its extreme edge overhangs the sea, stood a solitary edifice, which, like many other objects of human admiration, though strikingly beautiful at a distance, lost somewhat of its claim to be admired when examined more narrowly. Built without any regard to regularity of architecture, and little attention to comfort, it neither partook of the character of a fortiless, nor resembled what in southern phraseology is termed a gentleman's seat; but might pass for the residence of a substantial yeoman, did Scotland boast of such a personage, or, to speak in terms more accordant

to the condition of things north of the Tweed, as the house of the steward or factor on the estate of a person of consequence. The house in question could boast of two stories in height ; the walls were very white ; and the windows, small and dreary, were stuck here and there with a thorough contempt for regularity. Two doors, one in front, and the other in the rear, gave ingress and egress to its inhabitants ; while two chimneys, like a couple of asses' ears, surmounted the blue slated roof at either extremity. Yet there was about this clumsy edifice, in spite of these defects, an air approaching to the Aristocratic, which involuntarily led to a suspicion that its owner held himself above the common herd. A toll or clump of magnificent beech-trees surrounded it on three sides. Several bothies or hovels, clustered together about bow-shot from the garden wall, might pass current as offices, or the habitations of menials and attendants ; while a long road or avenue, terminated by a gate, kept the grounds,

if they may be so termed, apart from the rest of the country.

Now, as neither avenues nor walled-gardens were then very frequent in the Highlands, except as appertaining to the residences, at least, of the second order of gentry, the existence of both in the present instance was not without its effect; producing a belief that, however mean the house of Ardmore might have appeared if planted in the centre of a wealthy Englishman's park, in the western Highlands of Scotland its title to gentility could not be gainsayed.

At the distance of perhaps five miles or something less from Ardmore, in a direction towards the head of the loch, stood another dwelling, still more worthy of notice, both on account of its existing condition, and of the singular beauty of the situation in which it was placed. A double row of birch, hazel and wych elm, overhanging the course of a shallow stream, formed a shady approach through

the centre of a glen, excavated, as it were, from the very bowels of the mountain, and hemmed in on every side by hills of the most picturesque yet magnificent formation. At the extremity of that glen, where a plateau of fertile meadow land began to merge, if we may so express ourselves, into the slope of the hill, stood two remarkable structures; one a blackened ruin, of which nothing remained except four crumbling walls—the other a cottage, or hovel, composed of the roughest materials. Of the ruin it may suffice to state, that it had once, and more effectually, discharged the duties which now devolved upon its rival, till the part which its owners took in the civil commotions of the times, brought both upon it and upon them the heavy hand of a triumphant government. The cottage again owed its existence to the devoted affection of a race, who could not endure that the family of one whom they had often followed to the field should be indebted for a home even to their nearest of

kin. Both were embosomed amid a thick grove of ash, intermixed with fir and stunted oak ; and both were equally hidden from the observation of a stranger till he came at once, and unexpectedly, upon them.

It was a beautiful evening in July, and the sun disappearing behind the far-off mountains, threw the loch, with the base of the eastern range, completely into the shade. The lofty and spire-like tops were still, however, glittering as if with gold, when a man emerging from the glen just described, turned abruptly to his left, and began to follow, with a rapid and uneasy tread, the pathway along the margin of the water. A long sweep of road lay before him, now overshadowed with thick foliage, now open to the eye of heaven and cut out of the rocks which overhung the water, till a knoll or rocky eminence pushing itself suddenly forward, caused an abrupt deflection from the right line and hid the rest of its course from view. Towards that eminence the man

appeared to bend his steps ; at least his eye was fixed steadily upon it, and the change in his gait as the distance became gradually more and more diminished, seemed to imply that his designs, be they what they might, were not likely to carry him farther.

The most careless observer following that pedestrian from behind, could not fail to be struck both with the extraordinary symmetry of his form and the elegance of his movements. Considerably above the middle size, broad-shouldered, and tapering in the waist, his limbs though large, were neither disproportioned to the rest of his figure, nor wanting in the minutest line which the statuary would desire to trace. His dress too, the trews and plaid of the day, set off such a person to great advantage ; while a profusion of dark and curling hair that escaped from beneath a plain blue bonnet, waved gracefully in every light air that rose from the water. The youth, for his springy and active tread gave evidence that he had not

yet attained to middle age, carried no arms either for attack or defence. A sort of spear, indeed, was in his right hand, such as sportsmen use, when they prefer attacking the salmon in the depths of his pool, to the more tedious but scientific process of wiling him to his own destruction ; but the liester is an instrument too much in use wherever the lord of the fresh waters makes his appearance, to excite, at least in the mind of a Scotchman, any ideas of violence or bloodshed. No doubt the arm which now swayed it might, if called into play, turn even a less formidable weapon to terrible account ; but for the present, nothing about him could lead the most suspicious to imagine either that danger was near, or that this lonely wanderer by the margin of loch Arroch entertained the most remote anticipation of danger.

For some time the youth walked steadily onward, if indeed he may be said to walk steadily, whose gait lags by fits into a lazy saunter, and then springs forward, for a second or

two, into a run. Not once did he withdraw his gaze from the eminence of which we have spoken, till he had accomplished something more than four-fifths of his journey, when, as if to rest his aching eyeballs, he suddenly stopped short, and turning round, cast a rapid and feverish glance behind. What a powerful effect was that movement calculated to produce! Of the perfect symmetry of the young man's form we have said enough, and perhaps more than enough. We have alluded also to the singular grace which attached to all his movements; and the inference to be drawn is of course plain to every girl in her teens—that it needed but a countenance at all in keeping with the frame, to render him a perfect masterpiece of Nature's handywork. Unfortunately, however, no such points of agreement were here. His face was not merely plain—it was hideously and fearfully deformed. Regular features there doubtless were; that is to say, the eyes were of the darkest hazel, the nose

was aquiline, the brow lofty, the mouth well shaped and stored with teeth white as the purest ivory ; but over the whole disease had laid her heavy hand, and the marks of that visitation were imprinted as if with brands of heated iron. The small-pox had seamed his countenance in the most loathsome manner. Eyebrows and eyelashes were all eradicated, while huge furrows ploughed up both forehead and cheeks to a degree as terrible to look upon, as hard to be conceived. In a word, the veiled prophet of Korassan, if he had but half as much to conceal, did well in rendering the form of his visage a mystery to his followers.

The glance which the young man cast behind, though it might suffice to make a stranger aware of these circumstances, retarded not his onward progress many moments. In that brief space of time, he seemed to make himself aware that his motions were not watched by any curious eye, for he again pressed forward, till he

arrived at a long ledge of rock, distant about pistol shot from the nearer side of the knoll. Here, concealed in part by the branches of some straggling beeches, he suddenly halted, and leaning his elbow upon the edge of the cliff, watched, with an intensity too great for disguise, the coming of some object which was manifestly not yet within his observation.

The youth had kept his station about five minutes or something more, when two female figures suddenly turning the angle of the hill, opened upon his view. That he became visible to them at the same moment at which the bend in the pathway brought them under his notice, their first proceeding gave ample assurance. They stopped, appeared to enter into a brief consultation, and immediately separated; the one withdrawing so as to place the hill between her and the stranger; while the other advanced a few paces in the direction of the spot where he stood. Some violent emotion passed at this moment through his giant frame—his limbs

shook under him, his flesh quivered, and his breath came thick and laboured. But the struggle, though fearful while it lasted, was of short duration. He set his teeth firmly together, drew a long sob, and sprang forward.

The lapse of a few seconds sufficed to clear the space that intervened between him and the lady, before whom he stood with the air of one who has striven, though without success, to shake off some strong embarrassment. She was young—probably not more than eighteen years of age, and extremely beautiful, with a countenance that gave index of much enthusiasm, united to lofty principle and good sense; yet she also appeared to labour under no trivial emotion, while she placed her hand, as it seemed reluctantly, within that which he held out. In spite of the ravages which small-pox had effected in his countenance, the most cursory observer could hardly fail to notice a striking resemblance between that youthful pair. There were the same raven locks—the same dark hazel eye—

the same broad and lofty forehead in both ; while the general shape of their features, as well as the form of their visages, bespoke no very remote relationship between them. They might, indeed, have passed for brother and sister ; inasmuch as the very fashion of their speech accorded, as far, at least, as the rough notes of the man can ever be said to fall in with the softer and more liquid cadences of a woman's voice. Yet there was something in the manner of both which appeared altogether at variance with the freedom of converse which usually goes along with the most pure and tender of human ties. The young man's face was pale—a flush passed over the cheek of the maiden—and though his gaze rested upon her countenance, her's seemed rooted to the earth, as if by the influence of a spell, which she was either unable or unwilling to resist.

“ I have met you, Allan,” said she, after a long and uneasy pause, “ whether wisely or not, it is now too late to inquire. You pressed

the meeting upon me, and I could not refuse it. What is it that you desire of me?"

"First, Marcelly, that you would accept my deepest and warmest thanks for thus reposing confidence in one who, worthless as he knows himself to be, could not quit his native country without gazing once more—it may be for the last time—upon that angel form, and listening to the tones of a voice which has never fallen upon his ear, except to soothe, or to instruct. Thanks, Marcelly, a thousand thanks for this kind act."

"Nay, Allan," replied she, recovering her composure, "you over-estimate the obligation altogether. Not even thanks are due to me for this. Remember that we stand towards each other in the closest relationship—that the same blood which flows in my veins circulates through yours. We were playmates in our childhood too, and, for a while at least, friends in our youth. Why then should I hesitate to repose implicit confidence in one to whom I am bound by

the ties both of old acquaintance and kindred?"

"Old acquaintance and kindred!" exclaimed he bitterly. "Yes, we are, indeed, linked together by the ties of kindred and old acquaintance. There was a time when the one knew neither joy nor sorrow, unless it were shared with the other; when our tastes, our pursuits, our pleasures and our pains were the same—when the day was too short, chiefly because we spent it together—the night too long, because it kept us apart. Oh, Marcelly, why should the blessed season of childhood and perfect innocence ever pass away?"

"Because Heaven has ordered that it should," replied she,—"because, years, as they roll onwards, work not a greater change in our outward appearance, than they do in our principles and moral conduct. Would to God it were otherwise! but are we not different in all respects from what we were; and is the difference entirely for the better?"

The youth seemed much affected, both with the purport of this brief address, and by the manner in which it was delivered. For a moment, indeed, he kept silence, as if struggling to gain the mastery over himself; after which, in a low and troubled tone, he exclaimed, “ It is too true, Marcelly; it is by far too true. Changed indeed we are—I, God knows! every way for the worse; and you—it may be for the better, as far as others are concerned—but to me—I dare not think upon the difference. Yet you remind me, as often as we meet, that our blood flows from the same fountain. Why is this done? You would not mock me, Marcelly,—I know that you are incapable of playing with the misery of the meanest of your fellow creatures—why then remind me of that which has long, long ceased to be of value—which brings with it but a painful recollection, that neither you nor I are what we once were, at least to one another. But it was not for this I besought you to meet me here. In spite

of all that has passed between us—in spite of your coldness, nay, your aversion, still, Marcelly, I love you, ay love you, as man never loved woman: and here, for the last time, in the sight of heaven, and on a spot consecrated by a thousand associations connected with our history—I ask you, will you be mine?”

The maiden listened to this burst of passion with a coldness that partook somewhat of displeasure, while, lifting her eyes from the ground, she turned them slowly, perhaps involuntarily, towards the speaker. There was an expression of strong aversion, not to say disgust, in that glance, which she doubtless laboured to conceal, but which the eagle eye of the youth failed not in a moment to detect. The blood rushed to his cheek as he exclaimed—

“And is it even so! Cannot the companion of my childhood look upon this face without loathing, blasted as it is by the hand of the Creator? Fool! fool that I was, to dream

that woman's love could ever be bestowed upon me! Does not every stream that I cross—does not the bosom of the quiet loch, bear witness that for me no feeling of affection can arise!—that I am alone, and must ever continue to be alone, in the world!—God!” he continued, letting go the hand which he had hitherto held, and raising his own, clasped firmly together, towards heaven—“Why hast thou dealt thus with me? Is there aught of mortal stain on me, or on my house, that thou shouldst brand me as an outcast from society? as a wretch doomed never to know the blessings of domestic life—never to find a home where my weary foot may rest? Strike me dead where I stand, if there be pity in thy nature; for death were welcome a thousand times to one who bears the mark of Cain on his forehead!”

The tone of utter dejection in which this somewhat impious ejaculation was uttered seemed to go to the heart of the maiden, who

trembled excessively, and strove by every means in her power to withdraw the thoughts of her companion from a subject so painful.

“You do injustice to yourself,” said she, “to Heaven, and to me. You are no outcast from society on account of any misfortune for which you are not personally responsible; and as to woman’s love, do not think for a moment that it is either won or lost by the most perfect symmetry of feature, or its opposite. You, perhaps, may fix your affections—men, they say, generally do—upon a smooth cheek or a fair complexion; but be assured that it is not so with woman. No, Allan; that of which you complain were a light bar indeed to the blessings which you profess to covet, had not other and stronger obstacles come in the way; but look to your course of life during the last two or three years, and tell me whether it be such as a virtuous woman could approve? Abandon that, and if there be any thing in the future which

one human being can promise to another, believe me that the mark of Cain of which you speak, will be for ever removed from your brow."

"And will you love me, Marcelly?" rejoined he, speaking rapidly, but in the suppressed tone of one who still labours under the highest degree of excitement, "when this change shall have taken place; when I shake myself free from habits, to which despair alone gave strength, will *you* look upon me with an eye, not of loathing, as you do now, but as you were wont to do in those days when all our hopes, and fears, and wishes were the same? Oh, Marcelly, withdraw not this hope from me! say not that you cannot love me—that there is no similarity of taste or feeling between us! The drowning wretch catches at a straw, and I too would fain hold out this miserable hand, no matter how slight the twig that might afford a prospect of salvation. Be it after years, long years of trial—let half a life-time

be expended—only say, that at the close of that period, when the past is forgotten, you will be mine, and from this hour I become a new creature! Speak, Marcelly, for God's sake speak!—my fate—the fate both of my body and my soul—is at your disposal!”

“Allan,” replied she, “it were unjust towards you, and disgraceful to myself, did I, on such a subject, deceive you, even for a moment. Yours I can never be; but if my truest and most sisterly regard—if my friendship, in its most extended sense, have any value in your eyes, become, what you easily may—and I give them to you without reserve.”

“But if you can feel for me as for a brother, Marcelly, why not as something dearer than a brother? Are my manners, my pursuits, my principles, my habits, distasteful to you? Surely you would not profess a sister's regard for one who had nothing in common with yourself? Take back, then, that cold and

worthless bribe : she who can love as a sister may love as something more than a sister, if she will. Say only that it is so with thee, and do with me what thou wilt !”

The lady was silent for a few moments, as if weighing the sentence to which she was about to give utterance. When she did speak, it was with a deliberation and calmness not to be misunderstood.

“ It cannot be, Allan,” said she. “ I have told you before, I tell you now again, that the thing is impossible. A sisterly affection may perhaps return, but more than this I have not to give.”

Again her eye fell unwittingly upon his seared countenance, and a slight shudder ran through her frame. Keenly and sensitively alive to the wrong which Nature had done him, the youth failed not to perceive the movement, and attributing it to that which was ever uppermost in his own thoughts, his calmness entirely forsook him.

“ I see it all ! I see it all ! ” said he ; “ you could not abide that this scathed visage should be near thee at bed and board !—thy blood curdles to look upon it even now ! I am a loathsome thing in thy sight—is it not so, Marcelly ? ”

As he spoke in a suppressed tone, and her eye was averted from him at the moment, she did not observe the violent tremor that shook his large and muscular form. She accordingly replied with some degree of hesitation, “ You distress yourself unnecessarily, Allan ; it is not as you suspect, but—— ”

“ Enough, enough ! ” cried he coldly, while his extended arms sawed the air ; “ thou hast answered well, and I thank thee that now at last no ground of misunderstanding is left. Marcelly, the gentle and the fair, has a right to bestow her affections on one fair and gentle as herself ; and therefore Allan Breck must needs learn to play the swain, by whispering soft things into her ear. How well he is fitted

for the task, let God and man bear witness ! And by and by, when the bridal day arrives, is there a crone, from Boachiel to Benmore, that will fail to lift up her dim eyes in astonishment when she hears that Marcelly, the flower of Strath-Diarmid, has joined her fate to that of Allan the spotted !”

Marcelly looked up and beheld, not without some degree of alarm, that her companion laboured under a paroxysm of violent emotion. The perspiration stood in drops upon his forehead, his nostrils were dilated, and a stern smile, or rather sneer, curled his upper lip, as he bent his eyes, extended to their fullest stretch, with a savage glare upon her countenance. A girl less collected, because less accustomed to depend upon her own energies, would have doubtless anticipated some tragical conclusion to the interview, but Marcelly lost not her self-command for a moment. She fixed her large dark eyes calmly upon his, which fell under her glance, confused and overawed ; like

that of the maniac before his keeper, or the savage bull, when boldly and resolutely confronted.

“ I deserve this,” said she ; “ I had no right to anticipate a different result to a meeting against which my own sober judgment warned me. But if I have fallen into an error once, it is at least unnecessary that I should persevere in it. You forget, Allan, what is due both to me and to yourself ; and lest you should still farther transgress the bounds of moderation and good feeling, I will leave you. Rest assured that from the bottom of my heart I pity you : not because the hand of God may have scathed your brow ; but because, by making yourself the slave of unruly passions, you have sullied the fair fame that came down to you through a long line of illustrious ancestors. Nay, speak to me no more,” continued she, as he laboured to suppress his agitation, and made a movement as if to address her. “ To prolong this interview could serve no good purpose, either in your case or mine.

Yet, I would not part from you in anger. No, Allan, my best and most earnest prayer shall ascend for you day and night ; and its constant burthen shall be, as it has ever been, that you may yet become, what we have a right to expect in the child of your father. Then, though I may not love you—though your bride I can never be, I will not refuse all that is mine to give — my sincerest esteem, my warmest and most cordial friendship. And now, farewell.”

The maiden turned round as she pronounced the last words, and walked leisurely from the spot. No attempt was made to interrupt her progress, nor was a cry uttered for the purpose of detaining her ; indeed, her companion appeared like one on whom a heavy blow had fallen, utterly unconscious even of his own existence. He raised his eyes, indeed, once while she was speaking, and he continued to gaze vacantly upon her form as it receded among the trees ; but neither by voice nor gesture did he exhibit the faintest disposition

to divert her from her purpose. No sooner, however, had the last flutter of her mantle died away, than a sense of his own situation seemed to come back upon him with terrible violence. He cast himself prone upon the earth, and burying his face in his hands, burst into a passion of tears. But tears, which for the most part bring sensible relief to the unhappy, seemed in this instance to work out but half their purpose. When he rose again, which he did in the space of three or four seconds, there was an expression of savage ferocity in his countenance, with which a few hurried words, rather thought than spoken, were in no way at variance. "It is past," muttered he, in a low tone, "my fate is sealed from this hour. Heaven has utterly forsaken me, and here I renounce my hopes of heaven." As he said this, he lifted the spear which had fallen from his hand during the conference, and dashing his sleeve across his eyes, bounded back, at a rapid pace, along the path by which he had come.

CHAPTER II.

HAVING introduced thus abruptly to the notice of the reader, two persons, not unlikely to be mistaken for a hero and heroine, the "rules of craft" require that, before we proceed farther with our narrative, we should give him some further insight into the previous history and present condition of his new acquaintances.

Allan and Marcelly, bearing the common surname Mac Diarmid, were the children of the two gentlemen who stood next, in point both of dignity and importance, to the chief of the clan. Attached to one another, not by the bond of kindred alone, but by esteem ori-

ginating in certain contrarieties of character, which, while they lead to no positive distaste, hinder both boys and men from becoming rivals, Norman and Fergus had, in maturer age, drawn the link still closer by marrying sisters, also gentlewomen of the clan, and of course not very remotely connected by blood with their husbands. Norman Mac Diarmid, the father of Allan, possessed all those stirring qualities which fit a man for taking a prominent part in seasons of broil and confusion. Brave, hardy, and enterprising, delighting too in the sports of the field, and excelling in all manly exercises, he soon became the darling of his tribe; whom, in consequence first of the great age, and latterly of the extreme youth of their natural leader, he had on more than one occasion commanded in the field. It is scarcely necessary to add, that the clan Diarmid were, from generation to generation, distinguished by a devoted adherence to the house of Stuart; and that, from the days of Dundee, down to

the period when our narrative commences, they had omitted no opportunity of testifying their loyalty, by the free effusion of their own blood, as well as of that of their enemies.

We have spoken of the relatives as differing from one another in various points of character, which were just sufficiently marked to hinder the growth of any jealous feeling between them, without causing the slightest estrangement. By virtue of his closer alliance to the parent stock, for example, the honour of heading the clan ought to have devolved upon Fergus, whose cadetship began more recently than that of Norman by one or two generations; and Norman, without doubt, than whom a more loyal spirit breathed not, would have consented to such an arrangement without a murmur. Yet it was perhaps as well, both for himself and others, that Norman was not called upon to make the sacrifice. Fergus entertained no predilection whatever for the "rapture of the strife." Shrewd, cautious, long-sighted and

wary, the bent of his genius directed him rather how to preside at the council board, than to direct the progress of military movements; and hence, throughout all the risings that occurred, and they were both numerous and full of hazard, from 1715 to 1745, he never once quitted the shelter of his own roof, or brought his name into bad odour with the existing government. Had this conduct originated in a mere selfish desire of shielding his own person from danger, or preserving his own property, it would have brought down upon him the merited contempt of his neighbours and kinsmen; but while it undeniably did render both secure, it extended, at the same time, a happy influence over the persons and property of all around him. In seasons of disaster, Fergus stood forward as the acknowledged head of a sept, against whom, therefore, however guilty individuals might be, the general charge of disaffection could not be brought; and as these chanced to be of fre-

quent recurrence, especially during the nonage of the present chief, the whole clan learned to feel, that in more senses of the word than one, “ Discretion is sometimes the better part of valour.”

The campaign of 1715—if the ill-advised rising under the Earl of Mar deserve so to be designated—proved eminently disastrous in its consequences to the clan Diarmid. Attacked while on their march to join the Jacobite army at Perth, by a very superior force of their hereditary enemies, they had suffered, in spite of the heroic exertions of their young leader, a signal defeat; and being pursued into their own country, not all the protestations of Fergus availed to save them generally from the vengeance of the conqueror. The house of Glenarroch, for example, was burned to the ground, with all the shielings and homesteads dependent on it; while the tenantry were driven like wild animals to the hill, and the laird himself compelled to find shelter where

he could among his neighbours. Nay, Ardmore itself, though eventually saved, had well-nigh suffered a similar fate; inasmuch as the policy of its owner, though deep enough to hoodwink the agents of Government, carried with it no influence over the passions of a rival sept. Hence the general appearance of desolation along the margin of the loch at the period when our history opens—as well as the substitution of a rudely constructed hut for the commodious mansion at the head of the glen, where Norman and his ancestors had for many ages resided.

For some years after the suppression of this rebellion, the clans continued to brood in silence over their wrongs, without, however, venturing to carry into execution any of the wild schemes which their chiefs, from time to time, concocted. It was during this interval that Norman became a father; Fergus also, about two years later, becoming entitled to the same appellation, though at the sacrifice of a

life dearer to him by far than that of the infant that smiled in his face. The mother of Marcelly survived her birth something less than three weeks, leaving her child as a last legacy to the protection of her aunt, by whom she was nurtured with the same care that was bestowed upon young Allan. As a necessary consequence, the cousins became companions from the cradle; for Glenarroch and Ardmore were so little apart, that Fergus consented to leave his daughter in the hands of her nearest female relative long after the season of mere infancy had passed away.

As the children grew up, they were found, both in feature and form, to bear a striking resemblance to each other, due allowance being of course made for the difference of sexes. Their dispositions and tempers were not, however, the same. Though it could scarcely be said that he exhibited any positive vice, there was, almost from his birth, a headstrong waywardness about the boy, which an excess of

indulgence on the part of his parents served in no degree to correct. Because he was devoid of fear, robust of frame, patient of fatigue, and expert in all the amusements suited to his years, he seemed, in the partial eyes of his father, to be faultless; while his mother doated upon him by reason of his extreme beauty, and the ardent attachment which from his very infancy he exhibited towards herself. It was to no purpose that the Rev. Neil Macpherson, a worthy non-juring clergyman, who acted in the double capacity of chaplain and tutor in the family, complained that his charge was either extremely dull of comprehension or incorrigibly obstinate. Of dulness, the father contended, that no boy could fairly be accused who surpassed all his companions in those exercises which, more than any others, required readiness of wit and slight-of-hand; while, on the other score, it was concluded that the good Parson mistook for obstinacy the groundwork of that firmness of purpose, without which no man ever

yet made a figure in the world. In a word, not only did the fond parents shut their eyes to faults which lay exposed to all around them, but their very ears were stopped against the reports of those who sought to warn them for their own and their son's advantage. The results were exactly such as follow in all similar cases. A lofty spirit, which, if judiciously managed, might have sobered down into rigid integrity, and an unbending adherence to principle, grew rank, like a tree unpruned, and became pride in its worst form. Selfishness, also, the invariable accompaniment of pride and petulance, its next of kin, overshadowed almost every amiable quality in the young man's composition, who learned, day by day, to esteem both persons and things only in proportion as they tended to flatter his own views, or add to his own gratifications.

We have said, that though the cousins bore a striking resemblance to each other in the form of their features, there was not much of

similarity between their tempers and habits. Perhaps we ought to have qualified this statement, by observing, that we alluded only to the characters which they severally assumed after childhood had ripened into youth. If there be such things as natural dispositions—a fact which we are not disposed to question—then had Nature dealt with these two persons pretty nearly after the same manner ; it was the current of circumstances, or to express ourselves more accurately, the bent of their respective educations, which wrought out the contrarieties to which we now refer. As mere infants, and, indeed, as something more than infants, the one displayed not more unequivocal symptoms of a lofty spirit than the other. The eye of Marcelly could flash at a supposed insult, and her little cheek glow when listening to a tale of wrong, quite as readily as the eye or the cheek of Allan ; and as to personal fear, it may fairly be questioned whether the one knew anything more about it than the other. But the

outbreakings of temper which, when displayed by the boy, were either treated as subjects of merriment, or suffered to pass unheeded, received, as often as exhibited by Marcelly, a fitting rebuke; not conveyed in the tone of harshness, for of that her aunt was incapable, but in the language of affectionate remonstrance. As a matter of course, the girl obtained, day by day, a more decided command over herself,—and gentleness and magnanimity, a total absence of selfishness, and a considerate regard to the feelings of others, arose out of elements that might have brought forth a very different structure.

The education of these young persons, using that term in its ordinary sense, was entrusted, as we took occasion to observe a little while ago, principally to the management of the Reverend Neil Macpherson; one of those strange mixtures of simplicity and shrewdness with which the Episcopal church of Scotland, during its season of trial, abounded. Of hum-

ble birth, the son indeed of a feuor on the lands of Cluny, Mr. Macpherson had been supported at King's College, Aberdeen, partly upon an exhibition, called in Scottish parlance a bursary ; partly through the voluntary contributions of his chief, and of a few Highland gentlemen besides. Here he enjoyed the benefit of an unrestricted intercourse with many of the most devoted adherents to the house of Stuart ; for the provinces north of the Tay continued, long after the revolution, to retain a strong predilection in favour of the ancient dynasty ; and being admitted into holy orders by Bishop Halliburton, he served for a year or two, a cure or protected chapel in that good man's diocese. But the halcyon days for episcopacy in Scotland—if any days may be so designated posterior to the revolution, were of short continuance. Relieved by Queen Anne from the persecutions which they endured under William, the accession of the house of Hanover to the throne let loose once more upon the ministers of that communion the vengeance of their

rivals; and the issue of the rebellion in 1715 contributed nothing towards placing them in a more favourable position. Laws were now passed, not merely to deprive the non-jurors of their benefices, but to prohibit them from the discharge of their professional offices; for it was expressly declared that “every Episcopal minister performing divine service in any meeting-house within Scotland, and omitting to pray for King George and the royal family, (and a private room, in which should be assembled nine persons in addition to the family, was held to come under the meaning of the act,) should suffer six months’ imprisonment.” We need not add, that the spirit both of civil and religious bitterness which then pervaded Scotland, permitted little lenity to be displayed in the execution of this edict, or that the Episcopal clergy became in consequence a proscribed race, to whom, in sheer self-defence, the subtilty of the serpent was to the full as necessary as the meekness of the dove.

Expelled from his cure, and rendered an

object of especial jealousy to the constituted authorities,) in consequence of the part which he was understood to have taken during the recent troubles, Parson Neil (for so he was called) sought refuge in the fastnesses of Inverness-shire, where, however, he found less disposition to protect him than he had anticipated. The Grants, strong in the support of the law and zealous in the cause of the kirk, readily promised their aid in executing certain warrants that were out against him; and as Cluny exhibited an excusable disinclination to oppose himself single-handed to the storm, the Parson was again reduced to the necessity of providing for his own safety. He removed, in consequence, into Mac Diarmid's territory, carrying with him letters of hearty recommendation to the chief; and as an ancient alliance subsisted between the two clans, he received from his new patrons a generous welcome. He passed at once into the family of Norman Mac Diarmid, then acting leader

of the sept ; where, besides officiating as clergyman to a numerous and devoted flock, he undertook the education of the children, a task for which considerable learning, and a thorough acquaintance with the traditions of his native country, rendered him well qualified.

Having said so much of this respected individual, we cannot consistently lay aside the subject, without adding a few last words, by way of rendering our portrait complete in all its details. Of the outward man, meaning thereby the personal appearance and address of Parson Neil, it may be remarked in general terms, that if there was nothing calculated to draw towards him the immediate attention of a stranger, there was enough to satisfy the more searching observer, that he possessed a great deal of what is emphatically termed mother-wit. Somewhat short of stature, but robust and active in his make, with a countenance which bore the strongest possible im-

press of a Celtic origin, Parson Neil could either bend his features to an expression of absolute meekness, or throw into them an air of dignity approaching to command. Well read in human nature likewise, more especially as it is modified on the northern side of the Grampian range, he could adapt his conversation and bearing to the tastes of every circle in which he might chance to be thrown. His deep and sonorous voice, assisted by the excellent quality of his Gaelic, (an accomplishment, on the possession of which he greatly piqued himself,) rendered him, as often as he undertook to expound the Scriptures, a perfect oracle among his poor parishioners, who received his admonitions with at least as much of reverence as ever Arab paid to the prelections of Mohammed. But it was not in the church alone that Neil commanded both the esteem and respect of his people. Frank and open in his conversation, not indisposed to join in the festivities of the poor—a skilful

marksman, and an indefatigable pedestrian, he taught all descriptions of men to look up to him : the aged, because he was wiser and better read in the Bible than themselves ; the young, because he neither opposed himself to their amusements, nor scrupled to take a share in them. But that which more than any thing besides won for him golden opinions among the Mac Diarmids, was the persuasion, whence acquired we have not been able to collect, that he had been actually *out* in the *fifteen*.

“ She’s something like a parson, tat,” remarked a worthy retailer of wares, the only *merchant* within the district, and himself not suspected of an excess of heroism,—“ she fears neither te Teevil nor te Elector o’ Hanover—she fought te tane in te auld kirk o’ Aberdeen mony a time, and te tither at Shirra Muir ance at ony rate.

To the care of this person Allan Mac Diarmid and his cousin Marcelly were very early committed ; the one having attained his fourth,

the other her second year, when the stranger arrived among them. Upon both he bestowed as great a degree of attention as the most unreasonable guardian could have required ; and, for a while at least, he enjoyed the satisfaction of perceiving that his assiduity was in neither case wasted. But, as years rolled on, the culpable fondness of his parents encouraged the boy to pay less and less regard to the admonitions of his tutor, who ceased at last to retain any other hold over his attention than an occasional appeal to his pride might produce. Not that Allan ever shook off entirely the moral influence, whether originating in affection or respect, which a tutor, if he be conscientious and reasonable, never fails to establish over the most wayward of his pupils ; but it operated only so far as to dash the cup of guilty enjoyment with remorse, by no means to hinder that goblet from being drained even to the dregs.

It was not so with Marcelly ; exempt from the pernicious consequences attendant on over in-

dulgence elsewhere, she profited by the excellent instruction which he conveyed to her, till she became, by degrees, one of the best informed persons within the circuit of the western Highlands. It is true, that with the more solid information impressed upon her mind, was mixed up no trifling share of traditionary lore, of which the tendency doubtless was to foster an enthusiasm, naturally, perhaps, more extravagant than need be. But for this the worthy parson was not wholly responsible. Marcelly found in her nurse, Christian Macoll, a ready and willing chronicler of the deeds of her forefathers. To the details of these she listened with a degree of avidity far surpassing that which she displayed in any other pursuit; and we say a great deal, when we hazard this with reference to one, whose thirst of knowledge in all its branches was excessive.

The result of all this was, that as the cousins increased in stature, though they pursued the same studies, continued inseparable in their

hours of play, and appeared at least as much attached to each other as their connexion by blood might imply, many and striking diversities in their characters began gradually to develope themselves. Allan humoured in all his fancies, exhibited an inclination to render even his regard for Marcelly subservient to his feelings for himself. He caressed her only in proportion as she came into his views and took part in his diversions; whilst he would treat even her roughly, should she at any time prefer the society even of his mother to his own. Marcelly, on the other hand, was ever proud to sacrifice her own humours in order to gratify her somewhat tyrannical, though not cold-blooded relative; though the exertion necessary to do so she was not always able to conceal either from herself or from those around her.

Time passed, and both the boy and the girl began to attain to that period in life, when an unrestrained intercourse between the sexes sel-

dom fails to lead to results of a serious nature. At the relative ages of sixteen and fourteen, it would be difficult for the human imagination to conceive a more strikingly beautiful pair. The boy had shot up into incipient manhood, with an elegance of bearing and a regularity of feature rarely equalled; the girl kept pace with him, only that the lines of beauty were in her case softened down into the most exquisite gentleness. It appeared too, that the passage of years, while it wrought a change in the external form of the relatives, was not without its effect upon their feelings. Allan became day by day more attentive to his gentle cousin, and as a necessary consequence, less exclusively devoted to himself; while she, by some strange caprice, seemed to shun his society, in exact proportion to the degree of assiduity with which he would have pressed it upon her. His irritable temper of course took fire, as often as his playfellow put this mortification upon him, and he gave vent to it both

by words and gestures, which left no agreeable impression on her mind. But the burst of the moment over, he never failed of returning again as a suitor to the charge, and she not unfrequently yielded to entreaty, what she had peremptorily refused to menace. Nevertheless it required but a trivial acquaintance with the machinery of the human heart to perceive, that events were even then in progress, of which the issues were not likely to be happy. Allan's school-boy regard for his cousin was fast ripening into a stronger passion ; whereas, on her part, the seeds of passion were not only not sown,—but, in all probability, had as yet no existence.

Things were in this state, when the father of Allan, engaging with headstrong zeal in one of those conspiracies which served from time to time to bring their abettors into unnecessary trouble, perished under circumstances of peculiar hardship. There was a meeting of certain gentlemen attached to the Stuart cause, at

an obscure inn on the banks of Loch Earn, of which intimation was given, by a traitor somewhat imprudently trusted, to the agents of government. The consequence was, that the inn was attacked by a force which rendered resistance hopeless ; and the greater number of those present submitted quietly to their fate,—which in the end proved, as far as they were personally concerned, the reverse of rigorous. But Norman Mac Diarmid would enter into no compromise with the followers of the Elector of Hanover. At the head of a few attendants, he cut his way through the guard, though not without receiving a severe wound in the struggle ; from which, as there were no means of dressing it at the moment, he never recovered. He died, indeed, in a bothy, about a long day's journey from home, without so much as bestowing a parting benediction on his wife and son.

Great was the sorrow of the whole clan when intelligence of this calamity reached

them ; for Norman, as we have already taken occasion to observe, was regarded, and not without justice, as the flower of his race. With respect to the widow, her grief, though perfectly sincere, was tempered by a reference to one blessing which was still left to her. Her son survived ; and so entirely were her affections centered in him, that the loss even of her husband sufficed not to bow her to the earth. She caused Norman's bloody corpse to be washed and waked with all the ceremonies usual on such occasions : the Parson read over it the funeral service amid flashing eyes and glittering claymores ; it was borne to the spot where the ashes of the first Mac Diarmid lay, surrounded by a host of sincere mourners, who retired from the grave to vow vengeance on the murderers, while quaffing large potations to the memory of the deceased. But all this, though heart-rending enough, made less impression upon the widow than might have been expected. Allan still survived ; and so long

as he was spared to her, there was no misfortune under which she should not be able to bear up.

Six months had elapsed from the date of Norman's funeral, and matters were beginning to assume their old aspect in and around Glenarroch, when Allan was seized with the small-pox : a disease much more dreaded, and generally speaking, more fatal, a century ago, than it is now. As a measure of just precaution, Marcelly was immediately removed to Ardmore, and his mother alone remained to nurse and comfort her son under his visitation. Allan suffered terribly during the continuance of the malady, his sufferings being but little relieved by the injudicious treatment to which he was subjected ; but nature had bestowed upon him an iron constitution, and in defiance of heated rooms and a total exclusion from fresh air, he recovered. But he rose from his sick-bed so completely changed, that "the mother that bore him" would have been puzzled to recognize her

son. Not only was every line of beauty erased from his countenance, but the scars and blotches of that fell disease were so numerous and so large as to distort the very form of his features ; indeed it was impossible that even his dearest and nearest of kin could ever again look upon that face without loathing. Yet the unhappy youth remained for a while ignorant of the havoc which disease had made. He saw, indeed, and not without surprise, that his mother never approached him now, except with an expression of the deepest sorrow in her countenance ; but as every means of acquiring a knowledge of the truth was carefully kept from him, he only wearied himself to no purpose in endeavouring to account for the fact. At last, however, the fatal discovery was effected. From his own apartment the mirror had been removed, with the vain hope of gradually preparing him for the blow which must eventually fall. As yet, however, courage enough to introduce the subject had been

wanting ; when, contrary to the prohibition of the nurse, he passed, one morning, into his mother's room. She was sitting before the glass, in the act of dressing her hair, when Allan approaching from behind, brought his own seared and blasted visage within the influence of its reflective powers. He saw the horrid apparition, and shrank back in dismay, while his mother, uttering a loud shriek, sprang from her chair, and threw her arms about his neck.

“ Why have you done this, Allan ? ” cried she : “ go back, go back, for God's sake, to your own room ; and never look into that glass again.”

“ I do not understand you, mother,” replied Allan ; “ both your words and actions are mysterious to me. Why should I not look into that glass ? or rather, what was that hideous spectacle that met me, when I did look into it ? ”

“ Do not ask me, my son,” exclaimed his

mother, in an imploring tone ; “ it is not thus, it is not now, that I can venture to reply to your questions, or say aught except to entreat that you would retire to your own apartment. I will come to you there, when the agitation of the moment is over, and tell you all, that you must know sooner or later, however painful it may be for me to speak or you to listen.”

Allan obeyed like one who follows not the bent of his own volitions, but acts under the guidance of some mysterious power, of the nature of which he is ignorant though he feels and acknowledges its force. There was a strange load upon his mind,—a sort of vague anticipation that some dreadful calamity had overtaken him, not unmixed with a sense of awe, closely allied to superstition. He had listened in his childhood to so many tales of wonder, he had heard so much of familiar spirits, wraiths, ghosts, and the Botach glass, that an undefined belief in the visible existence of

such beings fixed itself involuntarily in his imagination; and the dreadful vision which had just appeared to him, recalled to their full vigour ideas which, though they might have slumbered for a while, were never absolutely effaced. On the other hand, he was not wholly ignorant of the dire effects sometimes produced by the malady from which he was recovering. It is true that he had never beheld so deplorable a specimen as that which his mother's mirror seemed to present; yet the suspicion that he might himself be a victim did arise in his mind, though scarcely with sufficient clearness to dispel other and more mysterious anticipations. On the whole, therefore, he returned to his own apartment in a state of comparative calmness; prepared, indeed, to receive some communication that would harrow him to the quick, though totally at a loss to determine the shape that it might assume.

In the mean while his mother, to whom the full weight of her son's misfortune seemed only

now to have occurred, gave vent, as soon as his back was turned, to a passion of sorrow. She threw herself upon the bed, and wept the hot scalding tears, not, we are afraid, of grief softened by a resignation to the Divine Will, but of misery that partook somewhat of the tone of desperation. It was, indeed, the remembrance alone that the die was cast, that Allan had for himself wrought out a knowledge of evil which she would have hidden from him, had she possessed the power, for ever, that gave her strength in any degree to control her emotion, and to enter upon the task that awaited her. She rose, made an effort to efface the traces of weeping, and joined Allan as she had promised. It is not necessary to detail at length the particulars of their interview. Enough is done when we state, that for a while she found it difficult to impress upon the mind of her son the reality of the facts as they had occurred ; that when he did begin to comprehend her full meaning, his agony rose to the most dis-

tressing height; that he ran to the glass,—stared at the disfigured countenance reflected there,—raised his hand to his forehead several times, as if distrusting the accuracy of sight unassisted, and then burst into a long loud laugh—the index of “grief too deep for tears.” All the efforts, moreover, both of his mother and Parson Neil, to reconcile him to a calamity which he knew to be irremediable, failed of producing the smallest effect. He shut himself up in his room, caused the windows to be darkened, and refused during many days to hold intercourse with any members of the family.

CHAPTER III.

A FORTNIGHT passed over in this distressing state, and both his mother and the chaplain began to entertain serious apprehensions for Allan's reason, when it occurred to the latter, that if the power of withdrawing him from a sense of his misfortune rested with any one, it was to Marcelly alone that they could turn with the smallest prospect of success. The kind-hearted girl, when applied to on the subject, expressed her readiness to act in any capacity that might be required, and set all the fears of infection, with which her nurse would have restrained her, at defiance. She

accompanied her tutor to Glenarroch, and left him to arrange, according to his own judgment, both the time and manner in which the interview should take place. But the remedy to which the good man trusted so much, was found not to be immediately efficient. Allan refused to expose his deformity to the observation even of Marcelly.

“ Why should I render myself more distasteful than I am in her eyes. Marcelly has long ceased to be to me the affectionate creature that she once was, and is it probable that her kindly feelings will return towards a wretch, so loathsome as disease has made me? No, no, sir ! tell Marcelly that I thank her, deeply, heartily thank her, but that I will not display this hideous countenance even before her.”

There was no arguing with a youth in the temper of mind which could lead to such a determination, and for the present matters were allowed to continue as they were.

Though disappointed at the issue of this

first trial, the parson adhered to his opinion that the device would ultimately succeed. Marcelly was accordingly prevailed upon to prolong her stay at Glenarroch ; and the anticipations which led to that arrangement, proved in the end to have been well founded. Day by day Allan learned from his mother, and the attendant that waited upon him, that his cousin continued an inmate under the same roof. By degrees associations began to revive ; he spoke of her more frequently than he used to do, asked questions respecting her personal appearance and mode of spending her time, and consented at last to admit her to an interview, provided the window was more than usually darkened. No objection was made to this arrangement ; and the scene, though abundantly distressing, passed off to the satisfaction, at least of the elder branches of the family. A similar course was adopted twice or thrice, with an effect, on each occasion, more happy than before, till at last Marcelly felt her-

self in a condition to touch upon the subject of his seclusion.

“ You must not give way, Allan, to unworthy feelings,” said she, “ nor rebel against your Maker because he has seen fit to lay his heavy hand upon you. What is personal beauty, especially in a man, that its loss, if it be entirely lost, should make you forget what is due to yourself, and to the name that you bear? Is there one among your friends or kindred that will love you the less because the form of your face may be changed, or are your prospects in life impaired by a calamity which affects only your outward features?”

“ You do not know the extent of that calamity,” replied he bitterly ; “ were I to withdraw this curtain, Marcelly, you would shrink from me, as from a venomous reptile.”

“ Let me make the experiment, dear Allan,” was her ready answer, delivered in her most persuasive tone : “ I am sure that you exaggerate the evil, since I must call it so, exactly

as you used to do my perverseness when I chose rather to sit and hear old Christie tell her stories, than carry your creel to the river. Nay, now, by all the happy days that we have spent together, let me convince you, that in my eyes at least, you are now just as much an object of esteem and affection as you ever were."

Allan trembled in every joint as with a desperate hand he seized the curtain, and turning at the same time his distorted countenance towards Marcelly, withdrew it with a crash. To say that she was shocked, when the strong light rushing in, made her aware, in a moment, of the frightful change in his appearance, were to employ language quite inappropriate to the occasion. Prepared she was for much—she had been told that he was grievously deformed, and her fancy conjured up the likenesses of various persons, some of them heavily marked, whom she had chanced to meet at different times; but for such a spectacle

as now greeted her eyes, she was not prepared. Not all her resolution availed to repress a start, for which the suddenness of the movement might, perhaps, have accounted, had it been possible for her to meet without flinching the glance that he threw immediately towards her. But there was an expression in that stare so fierce, a glare so thoroughly desperate, not to use any harsher term, that her eye could not support it. It fell to the ground, while her hand, rising as it seemed involuntarily, passed with a quick but painful motion, across her brow.

“Did I not say so?” shouted Allan, springing back into a darkened corner of the room. “Did I not tell you that to look upon this face without disgust and loathing, was beyond your power. Go, Marcelly! leave me, ere I curse both you and myself, to the fate which Heaven has worked out for me—we never meet again.”

She would have spoken to him in accents of soothing and comfort, but he would not hear

her. His fiercer passions seemed to have gained the mastery over all the associations connected with days gone by, for he stamped furiously on the ground, and again commanded her to be gone. The poor girl wept bitterly and withdrew.

Many days elapsed, after this harrowing interview, ere Allan would consent to receive a visit, even from his mother or Parson Neil. His curtains were all this while drawn so closely together, that scarce a ray of light could penetrate; and the nurse herself was commanded to withdraw so soon as she had arranged the food, which in slender quantities he permitted her to deposit on his table. It seemed, indeed, as if the iron had entered so deeply into his soul, that reason herself ran a hazard of being shaken from her seat; for he positively refused to hold the slightest intercourse with any human being, and noticed those who waited upon him only by signs. But in the midst of their deliberations how it

behoved them to act, Allan suddenly burst like an apparition into the presence of his guardians. They were assembled in the little parlour, the only room in the house which could by any misapplication of human language be termed public—when the door flew open, and Allan, arrayed in his ordinary garb, entered. As if actuated by one common feeling of dismay, all rose from their seats. He broke forth into a hysteric laugh, and dashing his hand violently on the table, exclaimed, in a tone of bitter irony: “What, afraid! all of you afraid! I am not the evil genius of the name. No—I am Allan—Allan Breck, if you will—but still Allan Mac Diarmid, as both friends and foes shall learn to their cost. Look up, gentlemen—it may be but an unpleasant object to contemplate—but this disfigured countenance is not my handywork—it is such as God has made it.”

We need scarcely add, that his friends hastened, by all the attention which they

could bestow, to divert his thoughts into a more agreeable channel; and that their efforts, though not attended with immediate success, produced, by degrees, the fruits that might be expected from them.

It is unnecessary to dwell more at length upon this stage in our history. Let it suffice to state, that Allan, passing from one extreme to another, rushed all at once into the most conspicuous positions which circumstances could enable him to assume. Not only was his reluctance to hold intercourse with strangers overcome, but he never appeared so much at ease, as when conversing with, or treating as his familiars, persons whom he had never, or next to never, seen before. The selfishness, too, which from his infancy had formed a prominent feature in his character, acquired every day additional strength; and as years increased upon him, he began to indulge it more and more, in a fashion as little creditable to himself as it was unsatisfactory to

his friends. Debauchery, in its lowest and most odious forms, became the main object of his existence. His associates were all chosen from among the most depraved and dissolute of the youth that dwelt within a circuit of many miles, over whom he gradually established a decided ascendancy, not more by reason of his superior power, both of body and mind, than because he far surpassed them all in reckless extravagance and unbounded licentiousness.

Of the irregularities in which her son indulged, Mrs. Mac Diarmid long remained ignorant, because she refused to credit the faintest report to his discredit. It was not so with the worthy chaplain, who strove, both by advice and entreaty, to reclaim his pupil from error, but who was invariably treated with an indifference that partook largely of contempt.

From Marcelly alone the unhappy youth appeared desirous of concealing his irregu-

rities. He met her but rarely, it is true, for she had now assumed her proper place in the household of her father; and it seemed as if the associations connected with Glenaroch were not agreeable to her. But as often as they did meet, he put a remarkable restraint upon his manner, striving to appear in all respects what he had been in the happiest days of their childhood. Yet Marcelly took no delight in his society, and he was too sharp of observation not to perceive that the case was so. How far the knowledge of that fact may have urged him forward in his wild career, we cannot pretend to say. All that we do know is this—that day by day, and month by month, the evil propensities of his nature gained strength. He became more and more proud, more and more selfish, more and more bent upon indulging his own humours—no matter how great the sacrifice which their indulgence might compel others to make.

Two years had elapsed since his recovery from the small-pox, when Allan, into the state of whose feelings the reader has already received some insight, ventured, for the first time, to address his cousin in the language of a lover. He was repulsed with firmness, perhaps with something of severity; for which the infatuated youth found a cause in the grievous deformity of his features; and he received on the instant an impression, not easy to be eradicated, that Heaven had marked him out as an object of its especial hate. Smarting under the sense of this imaginary wrong, he plunged deeper and deeper into the abyss of folly and crime. The whole human race became to him, with the exception of one or two individuals, personal enemies. Believing that he was abhorred of all, he repaid that abhorrence with interest; and though he controlled his temper so far as to deal with those around him as with tools, it cannot be said that he entertained, even for the most

trusted of his comrades, the shadow of affection. In few words, if ever there existed a misanthropist, Allan Breck was one; not theoretically, as those may be who withdraw from society and indulge their spleen in idle murmurs, but practically, and to the utmost extent to which circumstances would permit him to go.

The excesses of which Allan was guilty, and the habits of low debauchery in which he indulged, began, by degrees, to create such a feeling in the clan, that his uncle considered it necessary to remonstrate, in strong language, against them. His remonstrances were met with a haughty insolence, which Fergus could not brook, and the friendly intercourse which had so long subsisted between the two families suffered an interruption. Mrs. Mac Diarmid began in consequence to suspect, that for the tales which occasionally reached her there might be some foundation, and she summoned resolution to hold at last a serious conver-

sation with Parson Neil. Devoted to the interest of his patron's house, the Parson concealed nothing: he laid before her a full statement of her son's enormities; he pointed out the inevitable consequences to which a perseverance in such a course must lead, and he summed up all by entreating that she would take the only step that promised to hold out even a chance of reclaiming him from his errors. "He must be withdrawn for a time," continued the Parson, "from the scenes of his early profligacy, and removed from the contagion of a reprobate society; and as this can be done only by his temporary banishment from this place, you must overcome your personal predilections so far as to consent to a separation. Allan's education is as yet very imperfect: in every point of view, it were fitting that he spent a year or two in the low country, that his knowledge of the world may be enlarged, and himself become more worthy to play the part which may yet be reserved for him."

The lady doated upon her son, and would not, for a time, consent to entertain the proposition. As day after day, however, brought in fresh rumours to his disadvantage, and Fergus, not less than the chaplain, urged the adoption of the scheme, she gave at length a reluctant consent—this sole condition being reserved, that Allan himself did not object to the arrangement. Now it had not entered into the calculations of Parson Neil, that to consult the wishes of a party circumstanced as Allan was, would be either requisite or prudent, and hence, when he found his patroness resolute, he ceased at once to augur any good from the measure; but he was deceived. Allan not only offered no objection to the plan, but appeared to grasp at it with avidity, expressing himself impatient for the arrival of the day which should send him forth, as he expressed it, to look upon the world. All, therefore, that remained to be done, preliminary to his departure, was to make ar-

rangements touching the place of his future residence; and it being finally determined that he should take up his abode in Edinburgh, where he would at once enjoy the benefits of a polished society and the instruction of able masters, due care was taken, through the instrumentality of an ancient chum, or college acquaintance, of the Parson, to provide for him such accommodation as was deemed fitting.

While the epistolary communications necessary to attain this end were in progress between Parson Neil and Mr. Saunders Keelivine, writer, of the Lawn Market, Allan withdrew himself in some measure from his loose companions, and made more than one effort to regain the place which he once held in the esteem of his uncle and cousin. Though not positively rejected, his advances were coolly met—a circumstance which wounded his vanity to the full as much as it excited his regret; nevertheless, he persevered so far as to force himself, on more than one

occasion, into their society. Towards Marcelly, in particular, his attentions amounted to something like persecution; for he dogged her at every turn, and never failed, as often as an opportunity offered, of addressing her in language such as she had repeatedly forbidden him to employ; till she ceased at last to quit the shelter of her father's roof, unless under his own protection. Allan became, by turns, furious and desponding. Now he would meditate some act of desperate violence, such as might effectually humble the pride, as he termed it, of his cousin; now he would imprecate curses upon his own head, or blaspheme against Heaven, for having made him what he was. But as the time appointed for his departure drew on, all his former passions seemed to merge in the deep and harrowing conviction that he was doomed by fate to a life of utter misery. Could he but hope, at some period or other, no matter how distant, to effect a change in the feelings of Marcelly, then

there might be, even yet, an object in life worth seeking; but while scorned by her, towards whom he looked as the benighted mariner looks to some solitary light in the horizon, then, indeed, was the future without a beacon by which to guide his course.

It was with the desperate chance of turning to some favourable account the gentler feelings which an approaching separation is apt to excite, that Allan, on the evening preceding the day that was to witness the commencement of his journey, prevailed upon his cousin to grant him a meeting. With the circumstances that attended this interview, as well as with the results to which it led, our readers have already been made acquainted. We therefore return to the thread of our history, which has been somewhat too long interrupted.

CHAPTER IV.

STUNG to the quick by the reception which Marcelly had afforded him, Allan pursued his way homeward in a frame of mind which may, perhaps, come within the reach of a fertile imagination, but which common language were inadequate to describe. For a time rage—ungovernable rage, was the single passion that swayed him. He uttered no execrations, he made no rash vows, but hurried forward with a rapidity of step that would have afforded sufficient testimony, had there been any one near to record it, as to the state of absolute chaos into which his thoughts were plunged.

As he approached the foot of the avenue, however, pride began to struggle for the mastery over anger. He slackened his pace, turned his face so as to catch the breeze that blew from the loch, and shaking his head violently, made an effort to recover at least the semblance of composure. But all his exertions availed not. The struggle to smother one strong feeling brought another into play ; and, however mortifying the circumstance might be, tears rose into his eyes, and more than a woman's softness stole over him. This was especially the case as he grasped the latch by which the outer door was secured ; indeed, his agitation became such, that his first and most obvious endeavour was to raise the fastening with as little noise as possible, that he might pass unobserved to his own apartment. But that he found it impracticable to effect. His mother, from whose mind the prospect of to-morrow's separation was never absent, listened anxiously for his footstep in the hall, and hearing it,

though planted with extraordinary care, sprang forward to meet him. We have stated elsewhere, that from his infancy Allan entertained for his mother the tenderest regard. Before her, indeed, his temper, however ruffled, became on all occasions calm and serene, as if a spell controlled it ; indeed an exalted sense of filial piety constituted almost the only virtue which neither misfortune nor crime could eradicate from his nature. Yet on the present occasion even that failed of producing its customary effect. He pushed her roughly aside, and hurrying up stairs, took shelter in his own apartment.

To have her proffered embrace rejected by the son on whom she doated, was to Mrs. Mac Diarmid an occurrence so novel, that she found herself wholly incapable of accounting for it. For a moment or two she stood irresolute where he left her ; but a conviction that some dire calamity must have befallen him, soon overcoming every other consideration, her presence of mind almost immediately returned. She

hurried after him, and pushing open his unfastened door, saw by the feeble twilight which still glimmered, that he lay extended on his face across the bed. She sprang forward and throwing her arms convulsively around his neck, burst into a flood of weeping.

“ You are unhappy, Allan ; I have long suspected that you were so, and yet you have not unburdened yourself to me. Is this kind ? have I deserved it at your hands ? ”

“ I am indeed unhappy, mother,” replied he, “ so unhappy, that I pray God there may not be upon the face of the earth another human being whose miseries equal mine. But wherefore should I distress you with a detail of my sorrows ? you need but look on my face, and part, at least, of the load that presses me down, becomes familiar to you. Oh, my mother ! why was I ever born ?—and above all, why did you ever bring me through that dire distemper, to perish under which would have been mercy compared to this ? ”

“ Do not say so, Allan, nor blame any one

besides for events which God alone could regulate. You were born to be the support and comfort of your mother, who but for you were friendless in the world ; and you were raised from your sick bed in order that you might continue to cheer her amid the growing coldness and estrangement of those from whom she had a right to look for other treatment."

" You have touched the chord that vibrates here," exclaimed he, rising, and laying his hand on his bosom ; " you have probed the wound that has long rankled in my heart. I, too, complain, that those from whom I had a right to look for kindness turn their backs upon me. Yet I scarcely blame them. Who could love a monster so hideous as Allan Breck ?"

" A monster, Allan ! a hideous monster ! who would dare to call you so ? I tell you, boy, that in spite of the change which disease may have wrought in your features, there is not a girl in the Western Highlands that would

not be proud to become the wife of Allan, the heir of Norman Mac Diarmid's renown, and more than Norman Mac Diarmid's virtues. You are beloved, you must always be beloved, go where you may, and mix with whom you will."

"I would it were so, mother; for then would the thought of what I am, lose a portion, at least, of its bitterness."

"And is there any reason that you should doubt it? Have you received aught of unkindness at the hands of those from whom you were entitled to look for different treatment? Allan," continued she after a pause, during which she had watched with an observing eye every working of his countenance, "I know that there is some secret cause of grief within that bosom, and I have not lived so long in the world, without being able to form my own suspicions as to its cause. You and Marcelly have been too much together——"

"Hush, hush, mother!" cried he, interrupt-

ing her, and raising his hand towards her lips, “say not one word about Marcelly. We were dear to each other, it is true, as children; but if the changes which time has wrought have occasioned a coldness on her side, or on mine—the one has no right to complain that the other is fickle.”

“That will not do, Allan,” replied his mother; “you cannot hide the truth from me. You love Marcelly, and”—here her voice faltered and she spoke in a low tone—“she does not return your passion?”

“I did not say so, mother,” cried he hurriedly; “it may be, or it may not be; but what is that to any one except myself?”

“It is everything to me, Allan; everything to one whose hopes of happiness in this world and in the next, are all bound up in her desire to witness the prosperity of her son. Did I not say truly, Marcelly has rejected your suit?”

“And if it were so, mother,” replied Allan, dejectedly, “can I blame her for that?”

Oh, no, no ! I blame only myself ;—branded by Nature as an outcast from female society, how could I presume to lift my eyes to one so pure, so excellent, so beautiful ?”

“ I thought as much !” exclaimed his mother, speaking rather to herself than to him ; “ I conjectured that the extreme anxiety to reclaim him from his evil habits, the earnest desire to secure for him the benefits of a more polished education, was not wholly produced by a regard to his welfare or a wish to see him play the part that his father played. And Parson Neil, too, is he labouring to destroy the peace of a family which gave him protection when he stood most in need, and has afforded him shelter ever since ? But it shall not avail. Allan, you love Marcelly ?”

“ Yes, mother, more than I love myself—more than I love even thee.”

“ And she has rejected you ?”

“ Even so, mother ; she promises all that a sister can give, but she promises no more.”

“And you are content to come into her terms: you relinquish your claims upon her hand, and are willing that she should bestow it on some more fortunate rival?”

“Mother,” cried Allan, “I had not anticipated this from you. I did not believe that you could thus mock your son in his misery!”

“Mock thee, Allan! no, God is my witness, I but put to thee such questions as the state of the case seemed to suggest. Tell me, then, would the possession of Marcelly make thee happy? is it the dread that thou mayest not possess her that wrings from thee the salt tears that I behold now?”

“Were Marcelly mine, mother, I know not the circumstance, apart from the loss of thee, that could disturb my peace of mind for a moment. Without her, neither earth nor heaven possess aught for which it were worth while to strive.”

“Then she shall be thine. Not a word, boy!” continued she, worked up into enthusi-

asm; “ I will listen to no expostulations, no objections, founded on romantic ideas of generosity. The girl will be too happy as thy wife, however much her capricious humour may spurn the idea now ; and if a little gentle violence be necessary, why, no more will happen in her case, than has occurred in the cases of others, at least as deserving to be wooed and won. If she or her father lend a favourable ear to thy suit, I being thy spokeswoman, it is well ; if not, may Heaven forsake me so surely as I fail to make her thine—no matter how great the sacrifices required in order to do so.”

“ But I will have no violence put upon her wishes, mother. I love Marcelly, it is true—even to madness : but to force the body when the mind goes not along with it !—no, mother, no ! I may be wretched without her, but I should become ten times more wretched after such an act as that.”

“ Allan,” replied his mother, solemnly,

“ have you any confidence in me? Do I deserve to be treated as your friend, or do I not ?”

“ I have no friend in the world, mother, except yourself.”

“ Then believe me when I say—and I will swear to the declaration if you wish—that in all my arrangements I look not more to your ultimate happiness than to her’s. I brought her up with the same care that I bestowed upon yourself—I loved her as a child—I love her at this moment with an affection inferior only to that which binds me to you; and never could I think of inflicting a permanent wound upon her peace, were I even assured that by so doing I should secure for you the throne of a monarch. No, Allan; from my own experience I can attest, that to insure the utmost degree of happiness in the married state, it is not necessary that the bride should experience at the altar the same ardent love that burns in the bridegroom’s bosom. The

best assorted matches are, on the contrary, those which, on the woman's part at least, begin in comparative indifference; for if the husband be kind—and you, Allan, cannot prove otherwise than kind—her love increases from day to day, and from month to month. Now Marcelly does not and cannot entertain for you any decided aversion. That is clearly impossible; indeed her declaration, that she feels for you as a sister, may render both our minds easy on that head; and if she do at first experience a reluctance to link her fate with your's, you must, and you will, by your conduct in future years, teach her to look back upon the existence of such a feeling with surprise. Will you, then, put yourself entirely into my hands?—Promise to obey my injunctions implicitly, and I pledge myself that Marcelly shall yet be to you, more than ever I was to your father.”

“ If I could trust to all this, mother.”

“ Trust ! Allan ; can you distrust your mo-

ther? Have I ever deceived or misled you since you were born?"

"No, mother, never; nor will you mislead me now. I put my case entirely into your hands—you shall do with me what you will."

"Then good night, my son; and a mother's blessing guard your slumbers! You will prosecute your journey in the morning, as it was intended that you should; only be prepared, when you receive your instructions from me, to obey them without inquiry, and without scruple."

So saying, she kissed his forehead, and in less than half an hour, the silence of universal sleep prevailed through the dwelling.

CHAPTER V.

IT was a dark and drizzling morning, with a smart gale from the west, which drove the mist in heavy billows along the hills, when three rough and shaggy ponies, arriving in front of the house of Glenarroch, gave notice that the hour of Allan's departure was at hand. Three half-clad gillies, as the youths that hang idly about the residences of the Highland gentry are called, led the animals backwards and forwards, while a fourth, equipped in the garb of a lowland valet, stood apart, with folded arms, and an expression of considerable self-importance in his eye. The lat-

ter, indeed, seemed so perfectly satisfied with himself, that it became, in a measure, necessary to convince others of their own inferiority; and he accordingly proceeded, after examining the animals for a few moments, to make the grooms aware how imperfectly they were acquainted with the mysteries of their craft.

“Ye haenna pitten on Glenarroch’s saddle right, Joan,” said he. “Ye’re ta stupidest creatur that ever gaed aboot a house! Dinna ye see that the tae iron is twice as lang as the tither; and the curpins’s no’ buckled ava? Wha could pit sic a fule as you to look after Christian horse?”

“Oo ay, Callum,” was the answer; “ye’re aye finding faut! Nae doubt it would ha’ been better dune had ye pitten it on yourself; but Glenarroch’s mair easy to please than ye are; and I serve him, no’ you.”

“And what’s that ye’ve done with the

Parson's wallees, Erick? Did ever body see wallees strapped on at sic a gate as that?"

"I dinna ken, Callum; but, may be, ye wad be pitten them before. We'll a' ken mair aboot thae matters, doubtless, when ye come back fra Edinburgh."

"And if the fule has na sewed rapes on my powny! What do ye think I am going to do with thae things? If there be na stirrup-arons to the fore, wad ye put off Glenarroch's body-servant wi' twa rapes?"

"Trowth, an' ye may be right there, friend!" replied the third hostler. "The rape ought, may be, to be for your neck, no' for your heels, Callum."

This sally produced a laugh at Callum's expense, which he condescended to notice only by a contemptuous toss of the head; after which, he set his hat smartly on one side of his head, and walked away.

While this interesting conversation went

on out of doors, Allan, his mother, and Parson Neil were assembled at their morning meal. It passed over in total silence, each of the parties appearing too much engrossed by matters of private consideration to find leisure for inquiring into the thoughts that gave occupation to the rest. On the countenance of the lady might be discovered traces of a deep and painful anxiety—the expression of one who feels that some task of great difficulty has been undertaken, and that it must be carried through. Allan's countenance, again, though somewhat care-worn, might be said to wear less of gloom than was habitual to it; while the Parson mused upon something which evidently partook of a mixed character. He had spent an hour that morning in private with the widow of his patron; and the subject of their conference, be it what it might, was such as to affect him powerfully. Nevertheless, he was the first to command the use of

speech. Pulling a small, round piece of silver from his pocket, and examining its dark hands, he remarked that time wore apace, and that if they hoped to reach the inn where it was proposed that they should pass the night, the sooner they set out upon their journey the better. Allan and his mother assented rather by signs than words, and they all rose from the table.

We pass over the ceremony of taking leave, of which it may with truth be stated, that a colder piece of acting has seldom been exhibited. One brief whisper—whether of admonition or warning, the low tone in which it was uttered hindered the bystanders from ascertaining—was all that passed between Allan and his mother, ere, kissing her cheek, he sprang into the saddle, and turned his horse's head towards the loch. The example was promptly followed both by the Parson and Callum. The former, indeed, lingered behind

his charge, and stooping down, said a few words to his patroness; but as she merely shook her head in reply, he made no effort to prolong the conversation. In five minutes he was at Allan's side, and with a leisurely pace they jogged on.

The route which the travellers pursued carried them a space of two or three miles by the margin of the loch, and in a direction opposite to that where stood the house of Ardmore. For some time the scenery, though magnificent throughout, became less and less rugged as they advanced, the hills shelving gradually backwards, and the turf assuming at every step a deeper and a richer hue, till arriving at a turn of the road which wound inwards from the coast, they entered abruptly into the gorge of one of the most extraordinary passes that are to be found in any country. A narrow track, or causeway, cut in the side of the mountain, passed upwards between a double

range of black and precipitous rocks, which, totally bare of foliage, except where the ruins of a gnarled fir hung here and there over a corrie, reared their bald fronts to Heaven. Now a peaked and lofty cone would tower into the sky, its summit displayed by fits and starts as the mist drifted along; now an enormous mass overhung them, in shapes the most fantastic, presenting to those unaccustomed to such spectacles the appearance of positive danger. About the centre of the glen, lay a small but beautiful lake, from which issued a rivulet of clear water, that, leaping from pool to pool, and stream to stream, broke with the sweetest of Nature's music upon the extraordinary silence of the place. Yet the roar of the waterfall was not the only sound which the ear of the listener might catch. Wherever the stranger stays his steps, he will hear, amid the pause of the stream, a constant tinkling, as if stones were continually breaking loose from

the precipices overhead, and rolling down into the valley.

He who is suddenly introduced to such a scene as this becomes involuntarily the slave of sensations, which, be they of wonder or of awe, or of some other passion more intimately connected with our spiritual existence, take away from him the desire—we had almost said the faculty, of speech. We breathe, indeed, but it is like men brought into contact with beings of a higher order; for the absolute loneliness that prevails gives our imagination power to people the very air around us we know not with what. This must, to a greater or less degree, be the case at all seasons, whether of sunshine or of gloom; but when the mists are rolling thick, or the winds sweeping them onwards—when now they shroud in utter obscurity objects however near at hand, now open out a momentary glimpse of chasms, and bristling crags, deep gullies, and dark ravines, he must be made of impenetrable

stuff indeed who experiences no disposition to place some confidence in traditions that have marked out such spots as, in ages long gone by, the abodes of beings of a higher order than man. Be this, however, as it may, no fact can be more fully ascertained, than that the inhabitants of mountainous countries are almost always superstitious ; and if the circumstance be not referable to the wild nature of the scenery amid which they live, we, at least, know not where to turn for a solution of the problem.

From the infirmity (for so we presume it ought to be termed) to which almost all his countrymen of the last century were subject, Allan Breck was not free ; and even the Parson, notwithstanding his experience in life, seemed, since his settlement in Glenarroch, to fall occasionally into the same mode of thinking. With the former, however, a belief in the reality of spiritual visitations operated in rendering him uneasy as often as the subject occurred to his mind ; with the latter, no

stronger feeling existed, than does perhaps exist at times in all men. But though there was this wide distinction in the bases on which the superstition of the travellers rested, both seemed, on the present occasion, to turn their thoughts into one channel. They had ridden a space of some miles without exchanging a word, when Allan, pushing his horse close to that of his companion, entered abruptly upon the subject.

“If it be false that beings are permitted to visit this earth of an order superior to ourselves, how comes it that in all ages a contrary belief has prevailed? Whence does it arise, that, even now, with all the lights of modern science around us, a conviction to the contrary should be so strongly impressed upon the minds of men in general?”

“He were a bold sceptic that would assert positively that the beings of whom you speak have no existence,” replied the Parson; “and he were scarcely less bold that would deny

altogether that they may be occasionally permitted to interfere in the affairs of men. But of this, Allan, we may rest assured, that the instances of such visitations, if such there be, are few indeed, inasmuch as the ordinary laws of nature are not to be reversed, except on great and momentous occasions. If the fate of an empire hang in the balance, I see no reason why the issue of the trial may not be supernaturally indicated now, as it was in times of old ; but no man can seriously believe that spirits are raised merely to frighten women and children."

" I never supposed the contrary," rejoined Allan. " The repose of the dead were something very different from what it seems to be, were they liable to be called from their graves for purposes so unworthy. But, besides the cases to which you refer, may not particular families be watched by their familiar spirits, as James the Third, they say, was watched by his? Nay, what do you think of our own

Banshee? Are you inclined to credit the tales that are told of it?"

"This much I firmly believe," answered the Parson, "that Coll, the ancient ruler of the country, perished miserably by the hand of your great ancestor; and that a notion has ever since prevailed, that his ghost appears just before some heavy calamity is about to befall the Mac Diarmids. But, as I never saw the spirit, nor heard him, my credulity extends no farther."

"Then will you witness to-day what you never witnessed before," exclaimed Allan; "for if the tales be true that are current in the glen, I hear, even now, the wailing that precedes his visitations."

The travellers reined in their steeds and looked eagerly towards a corrie on their right hand, along the brow of which a cloud of dense fog was sailing. A low feeble cry, something between a whistle and a moan, came distinctly down upon the blast; and the

breathing, both of Allan and his attendant Callum, thickened as they took it in. The latter, indeed, who had gradually edged close to Parson Neil, presented a pitiable spectacle of superstitious horror, as, with cheeks pale, and eyes distended, he muttered, in a voice scarcely audible—"God preserve us! ta Botach Glas." But the Parson, though unmaimed for an instant, shook off with the rapidity of thought a weakness, of which, had he displayed it elsewhere, he would have been heartily ashamed. "That is but the echo of the wind among the rocks," said he, "a sound which, I doubt not, is always to be heard as often as the weather sets in from the stormy quarter. Besides, Allan, who ever heard of a ghost, or Botach Glas, making his appearance in broad day?"

"Elsewhere such visitations may be rare," replied Allan, "but here—hark! what call ye that sound?"

As he spoke, there arose from the same

quarter another and still more audible cry, as of men and women's voices mingling in a lament for the dead. By and by the scream of a bagpipe broke in upon the chaunt, which became every moment more and more distinct, till the mist, opening all at once, displayed to the view of the travellers a funeral party descending at a slow pace the brow of an opposite hill. To have hurried forward without saluting the bier, would have been to incur a charge under which no Highlander would willingly lie—that of dishonouring the dead. The three horsemen therefore continued stationary, their thoughts being entirely diverted from the subjects which had previously employed them, till the funeral party, after traversing the bottom of the glen, arrived on the same side of the stream, and stood before them. The bearers had rested the coffin on a little knoll, and were gathering stones with which to rear a cairn, when, putting their horses in motion, Allan and his companions drew towards them.

The Parson raised his three-cornered hat, and was about to address a few words of comfort to a grey-headed man, the excess of whose emotion pointed him out as the chief mourner, when the eye of the latter fell suddenly upon Allan, and the form of his visage was changed.

“Hast thou met me in my very teeth, man of blood!” cried he. “Is it not enough to kill? Art thou come to insult the living and to triumph over the dead: or has God delivered thee into my hand?”

He sprang forward as he spoke, and seizing the rein of Allan’s horse, strove to back him over a precipice that fell sheer and abrupt many feet from the edge of the road. It was the act of a moment; yet Allan’s presence of mind forsook him not; for he threw himself from the saddle, and stood in the middle of the pathway.

“I might have shot thee, as easily as I have saved myself, old man,” said he; “but there is blood enough of thine on my head

already. Go to—I never meant to insult thy feelings: but as to him whom ye bear to his grave, though I lament his fate, I take God to witness, that I am but the innocent cause of it. What I did was done in self-defence.”

“It is false, Allan Breck, and thou knowest that it is false: but pass onwards now, for were I to slay thee here, thou wouldst escape long years of misery and crime. Live then to be a disgrace to thy name and thy country—live to be a traitor, dishonoured, and abhorred of thy clan—be an outcast from thy native land, and perish among strangers, with the curse of a childless father weighing thee to hell!”

The old man, as he uttered this malediction, gave up the bridle which he had hitherto held, and made a sign to his party that they should resume the procession. They obeyed him without speaking a word; and though they threw looks of deadly meaning on Allan as they passed, a sense of duty restrained them

from offering to him the slightest personal violence.

All this passed in a shorter space of time than we have spent in narrating it ; consequently, neither Parson Neil nor Callum could take other part in the transaction than to interpose themselves between Allan and his irritated opponent. The winding up of the affair, moreover, being as abrupt as the other stages in its progress, the opportunity even of inquiring into its cause was wanting, till the funeral having passed in one direction, and themselves in another, a considerable length of road divided them. Then, however, the Parson, though he still laboured under the excitement of feelings strongly agitated, demanded an explanation of the scene to which he had just been a witness.

“ Do ye call it a scene ? ” replied Allan, in a tone of forced gaiety : “ for my own share, I call it a complete farce. The old fellow played his part badly, I allow ; but the farce

was a good one, notwithstanding the want of talent in the principal performer."

"Allan," replied the chaplain, sternly, "where the blood of a fellow-creature has been shed, and that by violence, the mind must be depraved indeed that can find scope for irony. I could not have credited any lips except your own, had they dared to assert, that Allan Mac Diarmid was capable, first of killing, and then of laughing at the deed."

"And who laughs at the deed?" answered Allan, fiercely. "I told old Duncan that I lamented the mishap, and I tell you the same. But if my life be in danger, am I not at liberty to defend it?"

"Unquestionably you are, Allan, provided it be in danger; but it is not every rash gesture, or threatening speech, that may be honestly met by a mortal blow. I heard both your assertion and old Duncan's denial."

"Parson Neil," replied Allan, reining up his pony, and turning with a look of angry

defiance towards his companion, "the time has long gone by since you have had any right to inquire into my proceedings, farther than I might choose to make you acquainted with them. While I was a child, your authority might be absolute; but I am not a child now, and I acknowledge no fealty to you, or to any other man living. The youth chose to cross my path needlessly—and what is more, I would have spared him if I could. I struck no mortal blow. If he died by my dirk, he threw himself upon it—I did not drive it into him."

"God forgive you, Allan!" rejoined the chaplain. "I have long been aware of your dissolute habits and unworthy proceedings: but not till now have I looked upon you as one defiled, in any degree, with the guilt of homicide. May the old man's curse be scattered by the winds ere it reach the throne of Heaven!"

"Let the old ass curse as he may," ex-

claimed Allan, carelessly. "I value neither his curses nor his blessings. It is a monstrous bore, I admit, that so foul an accident should have happened; but the fault rests entirely with the slain. But a truce to so dull a subject. I would rather hear, an you will, some account of the great city towards which we are wending — something anent the manners of these Saxons, of whom you all speak so lightly, though you seem to regard them as a class of people every way competent to improve yourselves."

"Then you must bridle your curiosity, till you find some other means of gratifying it; for I have no heart to discuss with you any such unimportant topic."

"Please yourself, good Parson," answered Allan, with an air of assumed indifference. "When you regain your good humour, I am at hand to share it. In the mean while, I presume we ride forward independently."

So saying, he began to hum a Gaelic air,

interrupting himself, from time to time, by an appeal to Callum respecting some feats of activity which the one or the other had performed; nor was it till the greater portion of the day's journey was completed, that the Parson so far overcame his indignation as to lead to a renewal of the conversation.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER clearing the pass, within the defiles of which the adventure alluded to in the preceding chapter occurred, our travellers found themselves upon an extensive table-land, which, stretching away to the eastward as far as the eye could reach, presented the appearance of a gloomy and endless tract of brown and barren heath. Not a bush or tree threw its shadow over the desert, except that here and there a clump of aged firs uplifted their giant stems, which time had left as monuments of forests long ago mouldered and forgotten. It is true, that the utter desola-

tion of the scene was varied, if not relieved, by the occurrence of numerous lakes, of which, one at least, appeared to be several miles in circumference; but a tract more perfectly cheerless—a region more thoroughly devoid of all character, beyond that of sheer gloom, because of absolute sterility, we defy the most fertile imagination to conceive. When we add, moreover, that the most depressed point in the panorama measured something about two thousand feet above the level of the sea, we shall have probably said enough to give our readers a tolerably clear insight into the nature of portions, at least, of the scenery peculiar to the Western Highlands.

The drizzling showers which attended them during the earlier part of their journey began, as they approached the head of the glen, to settle into decided rain, and ere they had traversed half the moor, the clouds were emptying themselves in torrents, which a furious wind from the south and west, drove directly

into their faces. Against such weather, at such a degree of altitude, neither cloak nor plaid affords the slightest shelter; and hence before they had accomplished half their journey, the wayfarers were thoroughly saturated. Their horses, moreover, kept with difficulty to the blast, made way but slowly, and evening was closing in ere they reached the inn, or rather hovel, where it was requisite that they should bait. Yet it seemed as if the inconveniences to which they were equally subject, served to smooth away the acerbities of temper under which they had hitherto laboured; for in exact proportion to the growing violence of the storm, the good humour of the Parson returned. We are not prepared to say that reason and reflection had not their share in bringing this about. Parson Neil was possessed of an understanding too clear not to be aware, that if you desire to reclaim any one, more especially a youth, from the errors which he may have committed, you must not

begin by teaching him to believe that his case is desperate ; and hence, in all probability, not less than in obedience to that law of nature which renders partners in affliction tolerant the one of the other, he gradually relaxed from his severity. Of his own accord, he adverted to the topic to which Allan some time previously would have drawn him, and long ere the day's dreary journey came to a close, he had recited many a tale descriptive of the Scottish capital, and of the kind of society to which his pupil was about to be introduced.

It is unnecessary to follow in detail the particulars of an excursion which was not marked by the occurrence of any extraordinary adventure. Let it suffice to state, that the storm of wind and rain gradually abated as night drew on ; that the travellers rose with fresh spirits to resume their journey, when the dawn of the following day came in beautifully bright, and that noon found them wending their way cheerily along the margin of a fresh-water loch, that

lay like a mirror amid a circle of green hills, over the sides and brows of which numerous flocks were grazing. Then came a dark and rugged defile, totally different indeed from their own wild glen, but still exceedingly striking; where the narrow road wound along the edge of a ravine, at the gorge of which the lake emptied itself by a rapid river, and a skreen of thick foliage, while it sheltered them from the burning rays of the sun, confined all power of vision within the stretch of a very narrow compass. It was the last specimen of Alpine grandeur which they were destined to behold, at least for the present; for on clearing that pass there burst upon them a scene, on which Allan could not but pause to look with feelings wholly inexplicable.

Born in a region where the word *plain* is scarcely understood, and the term valley means nothing more than a glen or hollow, overshadowed by mountains, the astonishment of Allan when, on turning an angle in the road, he beheld

spread out before him an extent of cultivated fields, which appeared to have no other boundary than the horizon, deprived him of the faculty of speech. Immediately beneath him lay a village or small town, sheltered from the north and west by ridges of rocks, and washed, as it were, by the waters of a lovely stream, that flowed with a quiet current along its edge. Beyond, again, were corn-fields and meadows, groves and hedge-rows, with here and there a hamlet, farm-house, or gentleman's seat; while from the very centre of this mighty flat rose sheer and perpendicular, the towers and battlements of an ancient fortress. Allan gazed long and silently upon the scene, so different in all its features from any to which he had hitherto been accustomed, and then, turning to his companion, demanded, rather by looks than words, some explanation of what he could not but regard as an absolute phenomenon in nature.

“ There, Allan, lies the Low Country,” said

his tutor with a smile, “ the fertile fields which our forefathers once owned, till, as our bards tell us, the Saxons came, and drove them back to contend for freedom, amid the mountain-fastnesses. That pile on which you are gazing is the castle of Stirling, the place that we must reach before the sun goes down ; and therefore, so soon as you have satisfied your curiosity, it may be well if we push forward.”

Allan made no answer, for his thoughts were still too much abroad to admit of his carrying on a common conversation, so they pressed their horses to a trot, and entered the last village that lies within what is called the Highland line, just as the church clock was striking two.

Having halted a couple of hours to refresh, the travellers were again in the saddles and pursuing their journey with an easy pace. A delightful ride of five Scotch miles along the banks of the silver Teath, carried them to a stone bridge of three arches ; about a long

gun-shot from which stood the ruins of a baronial fortalice, the residence, in former times, of the Regent Murray. This they crossed, after which their route lay first through the heart of an extensive moor, and then amid fields rich with waving corn, while more directly in their front up rose the battlements of Stirling Castle, crowning as with a coronet of masonry, the summit of the bold and rocky eminence along the eastern face of which the ancient town is built. Insensibly, Allan quickened his pace, a movement which his companion exhibited, for a while, no disposition to restrain; but as they neared the base of the hill, the latter suddenly reined in his pony, and motioning to Allan to follow his example, gazed with an earnest, and as it appeared, an anxious eye towards the fortress.

“We are no longer in the Highlands, Allan,” said he, “and there are many good reasons why we should use a little more caution than we have hitherto done. It were an

awkward conclusion to our travels were we to get immured within these old walls. Neither the son of Norman Mac Diarmid nor Neil Macpherson are likely to meet with much kindness at the hands of the Whigs; so pull up, if you please, till we ascertain how far the coast is clear."

"I was not aware that we ran the smallest risk of annoyance," replied Allan, "nor can I comprehend even now from what quarter danger should arise. I am absolutely unknown at Stirling, and so, I presume, are you."

"Perhaps I may, and perhaps I may not," rejoined the Parson, "but in either case, common prudence requires that I should not heedlessly run you or myself, or any other individual connected with Norman Mac Diarmid, into the power of the Elector of Hanover's red-coats. Your father was no favourite with the Whigs, and the Whigs, they say, are apt to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to many generations. But here comes one who will tell us how the land lies."

As he uttered these words, Allan looked up, and beheld a man descending leisurely by a steep road or pass, which skirting the base of the rock on which the castle stood, led downwards into the plain. The stranger, who was dressed in the ordinary costume of the period, had the air of a respectable tradesman of the better sort,—he might be a member of the town council, or even a bailie,—for his snuff-coloured coat was clean, and his ruffles and frill could not have been worn many days. There was nothing, however, as far as Allan could perceive, by which to tell him at a yard's distance from any other burgher, unless indeed the circumstance that he wore a small white rose in his bosom could be construed into a mark of peculiarity; yet he seemed to bear about him some masonic emblem, of which the full force was immediately acknowledged. A sign of recognition passed between the Parson and him, while yet they were a couple of bow-shot apart, and as both parties quickened their pace im-

mediately on the signal being answered, the lapse of a few seconds brought them together.

“ We have entirely failed,” said the stranger in a half whisper, “ and the enemy are now doubly on the alert. Every thing went on well to the last, but just as the plot was ripe for explosion, some miscreant betrayed it, and the governor has ever since kept such a look out, that a mouse cannot stir without being observed.”

“ You were extremely rash,” replied the Parson, “ and to say the least of it, altogether premature. The time had not yet come for action, and now all must be done over again, under the manifest disadvantage of suspicions excited and vigilance called into play. I suppose that strangers from the hills are examined, and that it is scarcely safe for us to rest here even till to-morrow ?”

“ It would have been well had you spent the night nearer the line, so as to pass this hot-bed of whiggery without halting ; but we are

not yet entirely awake. Keep clear of the main streets,—content yourselves with such accommodation as you can find outside the port; and if you take the road again betimes in the morning, so much the better. You know the town as well as I, so pass round, and take care how you bring yourselves unnecessarily into notice.”

The stranger passed on as he concluded this speech, while the Parson, instead of advancing by the track immediately before him, turned abruptly to the left, and beckoned to Allan and his attendant to follow. They obeyed without asking any questions, and found themselves traversing a rough road, which wound under the base of the hill, till it brought them suddenly to a point where the Forth was spanned by an antique bridge. The town now lay before them, rising street above street, as each occupied a portion of the eminence more lofty than another; while a battery of heavy cannon looked down from the castle, so as to command

entirely this the only approach from the north. But to avoid the town, not to find out the most convenient means of access, seemed to be the Parson's purpose. He still held to the left, skirting the suburbs, till he had completed more than a half circle round the place, and at last halted beside a house of public entertainment just beyond a port, or gateway, which cut off the liberties of the borough towards the south.

The house in question was evidently of that order which drovers, carriers, and persons engaged in the meaner kinds of trade are in the habit of frequenting. A row of carts, laden with bales, stood in front of an arched passage, beyond which, in all probability, lay the stables; while a sign that swung above the low door, represented, or was meant to represent, a Highlander and Lowlander in the act of shaking hands with extraordinary good-will. Beneath this curious piece of art, ran, on one side, a legend, which told that "Jean Mac

Raby dealt in porter, ale, and British spirits ;” while the reverse gave assurance that there was to be found within “ good accommodation for man and beast.” Such was the kind of hotel before which the Parson pulled up, with the expression in his countenance of one who feels that he is secure of a cordial welcome ; and his example being followed by Allan and Callum, the tired steeds were relieved of their loads, which they had by this time borne much longer than could be agreeable either to them or their riders.

The clattering of horses’ hoofs, followed, as in the present instance it was, by the application of Parson Neil’s riding-whip to the open door, soon attracted the attention of the careful landlady, whose shrill voice was heard calling loudly upon her helpmate, and combining, in happy union, the accents of reproof with those of exhortation.

“ Where are ye, Sandy ?—what are ye doing there ?—dinna ye hear folk knocking on

ye? Deil be in me if ever I kent sic a lazy sumph! Rin, man, rin! like a gude chield, and lead the horses yont to the stable! I'll see to the gentlemen mysel'."

As the last sentence was uttered, the portly figure of a female emerged from the lobby, closely followed in the rear by that of a man, lean, sallow, sharp-featured, and apparently about forty years of age, with an eye that twinkled with sly humour and impertinent curiosity. The latter took the bridles which were thrown to him by Callum, not without a leer of peculiar import, which became more and more marked as he surveyed both the ponies and their furniture, from muzzle to haunch, and from shoulder to fetlock. But a greater than he being present to ask questions for herself, Sandy probably anticipated that any interference on his part would lead only to rebuke; he therefore led off his charge in silence, while the female proceeded at once to recommend her own accommodations, and to

throw out such feelers as might lead to something like a ground of conjecture touching the quality and business of her guests.

“Ye’ll hae ridden far the day, gentlemen, and ye’ll want some supper afore ye gang till your beds—for beds ye’ll want, nae doubt. And, though I say it mysel, ye couldna hae pitten up at ony public in a’ the town where better beds are to be had. Ye’ll be frae the hills, Ise warrant ; frae the Westland country, may be—or aboon Callender, ony how ?”

“We have ridden some distance,” replied the Parson, as he and Allan followed the mistress into a small, sanded apartment, “and are not in a humour to find fault with any such food as you may be able to furnish. Of beds, too, we stand something in need ; and I know that they are always excellent here. But how is the mistress ?”

“The mistress is weel, muckle obliged to ye for the inquiry. But wha may ye be that speer so kindly after her ?”

“ Oh, she and I are very old acquaintances. I have known her these twenty years, and shall be happy to shake hands with her again for ‘auld lang syne.’ ”

“ Trowth, an’ I doubt that, friend ! At least, I ’m sure the mistress has nae recollection o’ you, whatever you may hae o’ her. But she’s no’ the less wulling to mak you comfortable.”

“ I dare say we shall recognise one another when we meet ; but in the mean while we shall be very glad to see the supper of which you spoke.”

“ ’Od, I ’m no’ thinking ye’ll meet muckle mair than ye hae met already. Gin ye hae ony particular business wi’ the mistress, ye may as weel tell it to me, for I am a’ that ye’ll get for ane in the Salutation.”

“ Are you mistress of the Salutation ? ” asked the Parson, a little embarrassed.

“ ’Deed am I ! for want o’ a better.”

“ And where is honest Mrs. Mac Raby ; she that kept the house twelve years ago ? ”

“Honest! ca’ ye her? It was a vera honest trick, nae doubt, to hae meetings of Papists, and Prelatists, and Jacobites, night after night, in this vera chaumer, plotting and contriving to take possession o’ the castle and put King George aff his throne. But the silly fules couldna keep their ain counsel. Honest Jean Mac Raby’s safe enough noo; and the concern’s fallen into better hands, praise be blessed! But what wad your honour like to hae for supper? We’ve a’ thing in the house; baith ait cakes and wheaten bread, and fools, and sa’t herring, forby rizztered had-docks, and flesh meat o’ every description.”

“Whatever can be first got ready, good dame. A couple of fowls will serve our purpose extremely well. But how comes the name of Jean Mac Raby still upon your sign?”

“Oo ’deed, I couldna be fashed to tak it doon; and mair na that, my ain name’s Mac Raby too; though Sanders, auld Jean’s nevoy by the father’s side, sud hae the

honour doubtless. But we just couldna be fashed making ony changes."

"Well, well! you will send in our supper as soon as you can; and in the mean while tell your hostler to look well after the horses. We must be on foot again early in the morning."

"We'll see about that," muttered the hostess to herself, as she closed the door behind her. "Ye may be honest folk for aught I ken to the contrair; but gin ye kent Jean Mac Raby sae weel, there is some cause to doubt it. Hoosomever, yese get your supper, and pay for't too."

While the landlady was thus exerting her inquisitorial talents upon the masters, her help-mate, Sanders, was equally zealous in fishing for information from Callum; who, like a prudent groom, chose to see his cattle fed and tended, ere he quitted the stable.

"Ye'll hae lived wi' thae gentlemen since ye were a callant noo," quoth Sanders, "and

I dar say find it a vera gude place. Highland gentlemen are kind to their servants at a' times."

"Sae they till me," replied Callum, "but we're no frae the Highlands."

"They're unco like Highland beas ye ride, ony how; and yere tongue's no' this gait awa."

"Oo ay, the beas are frae Maccullamore's country—he's vera grit with my maister, and sends him horses and knout in a present, noo and than."

"And ye'll be for the south kintra, Ise warrant."

"Tweel are we; we're gawn to Edinburgh to attend the college—he's coming out a minister yon ane."

The conversation had proceeded thus far, when the voice of Sanders' better half was heard, requiring, in no subdued tone, an interview with her helpmate. Sanders left his charge in a trice, and running to the stable door, gave his undivided attention to the com-

mands of one who was seldom disobeyed. Of what nature these might be, Callum, though he listened closely, was unable fully to ascertain. He overheard, indeed, such expressions as the following—"No vera canny"—"dinna like the glower o' them"—"the Provost behoved to ken"—"sae strict a proclamation;"—but both parties spoke low, and Callum's vigilance afforded him no insight into the purport of the discourse. At last, however, the consultation drew to a close, the dame bestowing, as it appeared, a parting charge upon her submissive spouse. "Ye'll tak your time about it, Sanders. Ye'll no stir till they get their supper; for be they what they may, it's nae use keeping a public, if we dinna serve our customers and get paid for it."

CHAPTER VII.

A CAREFUL observer might have traced in the working of Parson Neil's countenance, a slight expression of anxiety, as soon as the closed door left him at liberty to indulge his own thoughts free from the intrusive impertinence of the landlady. He gazed round the little room with the eye of one to whom external objects are familiar, but who misses something which he has been accustomed to see, and the absence of which gives pain. Nevertheless he said nothing, but rising from his chair, proceeded to the window. It commanded a view of the street—a wide but inelegant road, hem-

med in on either hand by low mean houses, and terminated at one end by an antique embattled gateway, in front of which a town's officer, or member of the burgher guard, paced backwards and forwards, formidable alike from the cock of his three-cornered hat, and the enormous lochaber axe that graced his shoulder. But that which chiefly attracted the Parson's attention, was the gaunt figure of Sanders, who, emerging from beneath the archway of the inn, made a sign with his hand, as if to acknowledge some final instructions, and walked leisurely towards the port.

A strong suspicion that all was not right, flashed across the mind of Parson Neil. He turned round, and was about to express his apprehensions to his companion, when the door opened, and Mrs. Mac Raby, bearing in her hands the ordinary preliminaries to a substantial repast, entered.

“The fools are a' sitten,” said she, “barin the auld cock, and he's out at his travels; so

I cookit ye up some nice hot minched collups, that might supper a lord."

As she said this, she spread a remarkably clean cloth upon the table, over which were speedily arranged an "ashet" of minced meat, well seasoned with pepper and salt—as well as plates, horn-handled knives and forks, bread, cheese, butter, and other viands. To these, permission being first of all sought and obtained, she took care to add a measure of excellent brandy, with a magnum bottle of claret; after which, wishing them "a gude appetite," she again withdrew.

"So far so good," said Allan, drawing his seat cheerfully towards the well-filled board. "We might go farther and fare worse, Parson; what say ye?"

"Only this, that I would give more than the worth of my best gown and cassock, that we were some miles farther, no matter how we fared."

"Why, what is it that ails you?—you are

not the same man since you began to breathe the air of the Lowlands. For my part, I think the new Lucky Mac Raby plays the part of hostess to admiration, though, to be sure, I had not the pleasure of knowing her predecessor."

"A truce to your raillery, Allan," said his companion gravely, "and attend to what a stern necessity alone compels me to communicate. Had you been different from what you are, it would not have devolved upon me, in this place, and at this hour, to tell you, that, during some months back, affairs involving the most important results have been under discussion throughout Scotland. The son of your father ought to have taken in these discussions a leading part, but for that you chose to unfit yourself, and now you must learn, for the first time, that the old game will shortly be played over again, though upon far more equal terms. In the mean while, however, certain friends to the cause, more zealous than discreet, have, it appears, thrown aside the mask too soon, and

the suspicions of the Government are in consequence awakened. Now, though you are perfectly innocent of all designs against the Elector (your father could not say as much at your age), your very name will condemn you; and I, God knows what they will not do to me, provided they can once lay their clutches on me. Yet, unless I greatly deceive myself, there is an even chance that this same fate will befall us both ere the night set in. You observed what our amiable hostess said concerning her predecessor?"

"To be sure I did: and what then?"

"Simply this. The Lucky Mac Raby whom I had hoped to find here, was a firm friend to the cause; her house was well known to all the Jacobite gentlemen both of the Highlands and the Low Country, and many a meeting has been held to concert measures in this very room. She has been betrayed, it seems, and the secrets of the prison-house revealed, of course. Do you guess the result?"

"Not I, for the life of me!"

“Unfortunately, I claimed acquaintance with her ; my doing so was evidently not lost upon her hopeful niece ; and in a word, Allan, I enjoy the satisfaction at this moment of anticipating the speedy arrival of a magistrate’s warrant to arrest us both.”

“Then it is well,” replied Allan, coolly, “that, though the tartans have been laid aside, the pistols and rapier are forthcoming. Let no rascally officer show his nose within that door if he value his skin.”

“It was exactly my anticipation of this,” rejoined the Parson, “that induced me so far to trust you. You would resist where resistance were perfectly useless ; for what could we do ? Kill a wretched emissary perhaps, and be taken after all. No, no, Allan ! We are in a scrape, it is true, bad enough of itself, but which the shedding of blood would only render a thousand times worse. We must trust to prudence, not to force, for getting out of it again. I must entreat of you, there-

fore, to give me your weapons, lest in the hurry of the moment you should be tempted to use them."

Allan expressed himself exceedingly unwilling to come into this arrangement. He would pledge his word that no bad use should be made of them; he would even submit to be arrested, provided violence were not offered to his person; but to deprive himself of the means of repelling that was what he could not stomach. The Parson was, however, firm, and Allan, obstinate as he might have been with any other individual, reluctantly gave way. His pistols and sword were in consequence handed over to his more peaceable companion, who laid them carefully aside in a closet; after which the two friends addressed themselves, though with a zest somewhat diminished, to their supper.

The meal passed over in quiet, and of the claret a considerable portion was consumed, without the occurrence of any incident cal-

culated to confirm their suspicions. Twilight, indeed, had set in, and Allan, elevated in some degree by liberal potations, was beginning to rally his companion on his fears, when a sudden rush of footsteps, and a hum of voices in the street, drew his attention to the window. He looked out, and beheld, to his dismay, a crowd of persons assembled beside the inn door, conspicuous among whom was a detachment of soldiers. The latter, under the guidance of a personage whose dress and demeanour sufficiently marked the sheriff's officer, halted beside the gateway, where a couple of sentinels posted themselves; while the remainder penetrating beneath the arch, were immediately lost to his view. But Allan was not left many minutes in suspense as to the probable design of these preparations. The passage outside the little parlour where they were seated rang to the heavy tread of armed men; and the thump of musket-buts upon the floor was distinctly audible. Imme-

diately the door flew open, and the officer, closely followed by Sanders and his spouse, and supported by four grenadiers with fixed bayonets, stood before them.

“ That’s them, Maister Gruppit,” quoth the landlady, holding a lighted candle aloft: “ that’s the men ye want. I’ll no’ say that they are no’ honest gentlemen, though they did speer after my good anty; but the Provost’s wull is to be obeyed. And I houp the supper and wine they hae had, as weel as the corn for their horses, will be paid for, somehow or other.”

The officer now advanced, and explained to the parties that he was the bearer of a warrant, which required that they would instantly appear before the Provost in order to give an account of themselves. Had the precaution not been taken of removing from the younger of the two all means of resisting this order, it is probable that blood would have been shed in the attempt to carry it into force ;

but the consciousness that he was unarmed kept Allan quiet, while the Parson readily, and without the semblance of hesitation, expressed himself willing to follow his conductors. They were accordingly led forth—not manacled, for their behaviour was perfectly peaceable, but closely guarded—and marched, amid a gaping and wondering throng, towards the dwelling of the chief magistrate.

Daylight had by this time completely disappeared, at least as much so as during the summer months it ever does in a latitude so far north as that of Stirling. Though conscious, therefore, that they were conducted beneath the arched porch or gateway, and along a steep and winding street of very irregular construction, the prisoners could judge little of the course which they took, till they suddenly stopped short at the door of a mean-looking house, about half way up the face of the acclivity. For a moment or two, they were left here in charge of the guard—the mob becoming every instant more

dense as well as more speculative—while the Messenger (for so the sheriff's officer is called) went in to ascertain the wishes of the worshipful Provost. But the delay was not of a very distressing duration. The Messenger soon returned; and the prisoners being ordered to follow him, they, with a portion of their military attendants, entered the domicile.

A solitary rushlight (one of sixteen to a pound) standing upon a counter, made our adventurers imperfectly aware that they passed through a shop, from the roof of which hung numerous parcels of candles, as the sides were fitted up with boxes, probably charged with contents equally lucid. Beyond this was a small closet or back shop, measuring, perhaps, ten feet in length by six in width, and communicating with the outer shop mainly by a door, but not less efficiently by means of a window, composed of a single pane of glass. There sat the Provost—Provost Dalglish—a man of strong Whig principles and extra-

ordinary self-importance; small, indeed, of stature and empty of understanding, but not the less valuable in his own eyes. This eminent specimen of civic wisdom occupied a huge arm-chair, withdrawn, as be seemed his importance, a considerable space from the contamination of touch; while close to the table sat the Town-clerk, Mr. Ebenezer Littlejohn, having writing materials spread in great abundance before him.

A brief pause followed the introduction of the prisoners, during which the magistrate and they surveyed one another with looks expressive, on the one part, of consequential curiosity; on the other, of something like surprise, if not contempt. At length the Provost began his inquiries into the nature of their business in Stirling, the points from whence they came, and whither they were going—as well as touching their names, qualities, occupations, and designs in riding the country thus mysteriously during a season of more than com-

mon anxiety. To the first of these questions a direct and explicit answer was given. They were merely birds of passage, halting for the night to refresh their horses, and intending to pursue their journey in the morning; but with respect to the others, somewhat more of caution was observed. They did not deny that they were from the hills; indeed, they avowed that they were natives of Argyleshire, and that they were proceeding to the capital, for the purpose of completing the education of the young gentleman, to whom the elder acted in capacity of tutor. Then again, as to any mystery, or attempt at mystery, that was absolutely derided; while the intelligence that the present times were pregnant with sources of uneasiness was received with well-feigned astonishment.

“And now, sir,” continued the Parson, for he, as may be imagined, was the spokesman, “permit me in my turn to ask, why two of the King’s subjects should thus be brought before

you as prisoners, without the slightest ground of accusation, or even of reasonable suspicion against them?"

The Provost and Town-clerk stared at one another, as if thrown aback by so blunt a question; and the former, who was evidently, like all mean men in authority, not less cowardly than insolent, changed colour, while his eye fell under the stern gaze of his prisoners. The official, however, who appeared somewhat under the influence of strong drink, exhibited no disposition to abate one jot of his dignity.

"The King's proclamation bears ye oot, Provost Dalglish; ye are fully justified in sending them baith to the Tolbooth; for beyond a' doubt they 're strangers here, and Deil be in me gin I ken their names yet."

"Oo ay, gentlemen, your names, your names," quoth the Provost; "ye haenna gien us yere names: what do they ca' ye?"

"We have no cause to be ashamed of our names," replied the Parson, "nor can we ex-

perience the slightest reluctance to communicate them ; but we wish first of all to be made acquainted with the nature of the charge under which we have been thus unceremoniously dealt with."

" Ye've naething to do wi' that, Provost," interposed the man of law ; " ye're absolute monarch here ony how ; and being required on information lodged to tak up a' suspicious characters, ye're no' bound to explain to them why ye do so. Let them gie an account o' themselves."

" Oo ay," cried the Provost, " gie an account o' yourselves. It's for that ye're brought here, according to the King's proclamation."

" I have told you already, sir," replied the Parson, " that we are gentlemen from Argyleshire, proceeding on our lawful business to Edinburgh. You are perfectly welcome to examine our baggage and papers, and if you find anything there capable of exciting a shadow of suspicion against us, your own sense

of duty will tell you how it becomes you to act."

"Where's Sanders Mac Raby?" ejaculated the Writer: "what was't ye telt me when ye got the warrant?"

"They speer'd unco friendly for my aunty," said Sanders, "and my wife thought that ye boot to ken that sic folk were in her house."

"Noo then, sir," exclaimed the Writer, looking as wise as men in a state of more than half intoxication generally do, "what say ye to that? Ask them hoo they cam to speer after that auld Jacobite limmer; Provost, ask them that?"

"Oo ay," said the Provost, "what kent ye aboot auld Lucky Mac Raby,—what kent ye aboot her?"

"Nothing more than men generally do about the keepers of taverns, which in the course of their travels they may chance to frequent," replied Parson Neil. "I (for this young gentleman was never in Stirling till to-

day) have passed through this town before, and it so happens that I put up, twelve years ago, at the sign of the Salutation. Is there anything extraordinary in that?"

"But your servant says ye're no' fra the Highlands," interposed Sanders.

"Oo ay," interposed the Provost, "what say ye to that? Your servant denies that ye come fra the Highlands."

"If my servant perceives that impertinent questions are put to him," said Allan, "he does quite right in refusing to gratify the curiosity of the inquirer,—I confess that this is always my way, and I cannot blame another if he adopt it."

"Ye're a punky chield noo," answered Mr. Littlejohn, looking lazily over his spectacles, "but ye're no' just in the situation to gie vent to your humour. Provost, ye had better send for their wallees; may be we'll find there what they dinna seem willing to gie us by word o' mooth."

“Oo ay,” answered the Provost, “gang yer way doon for the wallees, Gruppit, gang yer way doon for the wallees.”

The examination had proceeded thus far when there occurred a slight bustle in the outer shop, which was immediately succeeded by the entrance into the sanctum sanctorum of the same individual by whom the travellers had been met at the outskirts of the town. He was received with every mark of respect by the Provost and his clerk, both of whom rose to bid him welcome, and both of whom accepted the abrupt mark of recognition with which he greeted them as inferiors are accustomed to accept the condescending attention of their superiors. He sat down, however, without scruple, and looking sternly towards Allan and his fellow prisoner, said a few words, expressive not of curiosity, but of an apparent conviction that two dangerous characters stood before him.

“Have we got spies or traitors here again,

Provost?" said he. "Your vigilance deserves the utmost approbation of the Government, and shall not pass unnoticed."

"One or the other, Drumtohtie," replied the writer, "that ye may depend on; for they are auld acquaintances of Lucky Mac Raby, and ye ken as well as I do, that little good comes of the acquaintances o' sic as her."

"You have examined them of course, or are in the act of doing so?" observed the stranger: "has their baggage been searched?—or rather, perhaps, I ought to have inquired whether any definite charge has been lodged against them? These are troublesome times in which we live; nor is it the least vexatious feature in the case, that we magistrates are compelled to do continual violence to our own feelings, by treating as suspicious characters many who are as respectable as ourselves. But I make no doubt that you have good ground to go upon at present,—something more than the late proclamation, which certainly does not autho-

rize an arrest, unless on information formally laid."

"We hae our information, Drumtochtie, of coorse," replied the Town-clerk. "Alexander Mac Raby maks oath and saith—"

"Na, na, Maister Littlejohn," interrupted Sanders, "dinna pit mair on my back than it can carry. I telt ye by word of mooth, but made nae oath on't, that there was some unchancy-like folk at our public, and then ye ken——"

"Haud your tongue, ye clavering goose," interrupted the Writer; "if ye didna just swear tilt, ye did as muckle, for ye declared that ye was ready to swear."

"Is there no complaint nor information upon oath?" asked the stranger.

"Troth, I kenna whether there be or no," replied the Provost, "but Maister Littlejohn said that a' was right, and I believed him."

"Upon my word, gentlemen," observed the stranger in a sort of whisper, which was, however, quite audible where the prisoners stood,

“you have somewhat overstepped the limits of your authority ; I hope you may have sufficient grounds for what is done. Have you ascertained whence the prisoners come, whither they are going, and what their business may be in Stirling ?”

It is not necessary to continue the details of this civic examination. Enough is done when we state, that the interference of the stranger gave a totally novel turn to the whole affair ; that the baggage of the travellers was examined, that nothing suspicious was found there, and that the Provost and Town-clerk were alike compelled to acknowledge, that no ground for committal, or even for demanding bail, had been made out. The consequence was, that the prisoners were dismissed, greatly to the disappointment of the mob, and, as it appeared, not much to the satisfaction of Master Littlejohn ; who continued to asseverate that he “never kent any thing gude about the frequenters o’ auld Lucky Mac Raby’s public ayont the port.” But that which more than

all the rest of the proceedings struck Allan with surprise, was the behaviour of the gentleman, to whose address they were so much indebted. Though he had spoken familiarly to Parson Neil only two short hours before, he now treated him as an absolute stranger, and withdrew from the Provost's room, as soon as the examination came to an end, without so much as exchanging with him a sign of recognition. Nevertheless, a new light had burst into Allan's mind. He therefore retired to the inn, full of astonishment indeed, and in silence; though not wholly destitute of a clue, by means of which the mystery could be in some degree solved.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE travellers were scarcely restored to their sanctuary in the little sanded parlour, when Callum, who by some chance or another had been permitted during recent occurrences to go at large, broke in abruptly upon their *tête-à-tête*, and put a slip of written paper into the hands of Parson Neil. He read it hastily, tore it into minute shreds, and applying the lighted candle to the mass, reduced them to ashes. He then summoned the landlord, and after exhausting a tolerable vocabulary of abuse, commanded him to send in his bill without delay, inasmuch as they should not continue an hour

longer under the roof of one to whose kindness they were so little indebted. It was to no purpose that first Sanders and then his spouse entreated the gentleman to overlook their fault, "whilk was entirely to be attributed to their zeal for the true Kirk, and the Protestant succession." The insulted guest declared, that no consideration whatever would induce him to retract his determination, and Callum was in consequence instructed to lead the horses to the street with as little delay as possible.

To pay for the viands consumed considerably more than they were worth, to replace the baggage in marching order, and to restore to Allan the weapons which prudence had induced his companion temporarily to remove, occupied the space of a few moments only. The travellers then mounted, and drew off slowly from the door of a habitation where their reception had certainly not been of the most friendly character. But the tardiness of their

pace was not of long continuance. Having cleared the suburbs, and attained to a point where two roads met, Parson Neil, in a suppressed voice, indicated his wish that a fresh order of route should prevail. They accordingly took that path which diverged to the right, and plunging their spurs into their horses' flanks, set forward at the utmost rate of which the jaded animals were capable.

They had ridden thus, perhaps, a couple of miles, along a rough road, and under a darkened sky, when, attaining to an immense shaggy, as it seemed, with fir-trees on the right, and overgrown with gorse or some other low bushes to the left, the distressed state of their overwrought steeds compelled them to slacken their pace. This was the more necessary, because at every step the road became more and more difficult of passage, a steep and broken bank occurring from time to time, which it behoved them to surmount; with here and there a ledge of smooth

whinstone, worn away, in all probability, by the feet of passengers alone. But it was not till these obstacles had been surmounted, and a second road to the right brought them upon a more level track, that a syllable of conversation passed between them. The Parson, on the contrary, whose thoughts seemed wholly occupied, not only made no remark himself, but permitted many observations on the part of Allan to remain unanswered; indeed, his whole manner was that of one, who feels that dangers are around him, and that his chances of escape are, to say the least, uncertain.

It was near midnight, when Allan found himself approaching a solitary house, which, with its outbuildings, apparently lodges and stables, formed a sort of court-yard, or three sides of a square. Of the architecture of that mansion, as well as of the localities with which it was surrounded, the darkness necessarily hindered him from receiving any distinct impression; but the clank of his horse's hoofs,

as he guided the animal towards it, made him aware that the court itself at least was paved. A light too, that streamed from a small window just above the front door, afforded proof that the place was inhabited; and that its inmates were not all retired to rest, the prompt appearance of a man, in answer, as it seemed, to a low whistle from Parson Neil, at once assured him. Allan was not slow in imitating the example that was set. He alighted, and giving his bridle to the stranger, followed his tutor on foot.

Without pausing to knock, Parson Neil lifted the latch, and Allan saw before him a narrow flight of stone steps, illuminated by a single rushlight, stuck in the recess of what is called a "bore," or small casement. By these they ascended to a long passage or corridor, which ran, as it appeared to Allan, along the whole breadth of the house; and served, as a variety of doorways distinctly pointed out, to connect its several apartments together. Here

again Parson Neil gave proof that he was not ignorant of the *locale*. He turned to his left, and leading forward, conducted Allan into a small but comfortable parlour, where, with his back to the grate, in which, notwithstanding the season of the year, a fire of peat was burning, stood the same individual who under such strange circumstances had twice already crossed their path.

“ I am glad to see you here, Mr. Macpherson,” said he, advancing and extending his hand, “ particularly glad that you have been thus prompt in your movements. Had you delayed one half hour, no power on earth could have saved you. But how, in the name of fortune, came you to fix your quarters in the very place of all others which you ought to have avoided? I thought you had been aware of the change of government there, and that the trap had been actually baited for you, and such as you.”

“ I never heard of the circumstance till I

learned it from the people themselves: how indeed should I? But is it prudent in you to commit yourself here, even for a single night, with a man circumstanced as I am? What if they should follow us?"

"Why then we must do as has been done before," replied the stranger. "The old hiding-hole has never, as far as I know, been discovered; and I believe it is large enough to contain two with a little squeezing. But I apprehend no pursuit in this direction to-night. As soon, therefore, as you have refreshed yourselves with such viands as we can furnish, it will be the wisest course to go to bed, for the sun must not rise upon you within four miles of Stirling."

As he said this, he opened a small closet, from which he was proceeding to bring forth certain articles of food, when Parson Neil restrained him. A draught of milk was all that he would accept for himself, or permit Allan, who scarcely relished the beverage, to receive; after which

their host, for so he appeared to be, marshalled them to their chamber. It was a garret, unceiled, and of narrow dimensions, containing simply a couple of mattresses spread upon the floor. Upon one of these Allan threw himself down, and the other being occupied by the Parson, the lights were speedily extinguished, and a profound silence reigned throughout the dwelling.

A man accustomed, as Allan had been from his earliest years, to fatigue in its greatest excess, and constant exposure to the weather, is not easily put out of the ordinary routine of his existence either when in action or in repose. On the present occasion, however, the case proved to be otherwise. Allan slept soundly and long; indeed he awoke not till after the morning sun had beaten so fiercely through the skylight of his chamber, as to give to it the temperature, rather of a tropical than of a Scottish dormitory. For a few moments he stared about him in profound ignorance as to where

he was. He sat up, indeed, and rubbed his eyes more than once, ere his thoughts attained to any degree of consistency ; and even then all that recurred to him was a vague and confused recollection that certain strange scenes had passed under his observation during the previous day. A glance towards the mattress, however, on which the Parson had reposed, recalled the events of the previous night distinctly to his memory. He leaped from his bed, and seeing that the other was vacated, dressed in all haste, under the painful suspicion that his ill-timed drowsiness might have put his tutor to inconvenience, if not to personal hazard.

Little time was expended by Allan upon his toilet, after completing which he descended a flight of perpendicular wooden steps, which without so much as the skreen of a door, far less the intervention of a landing-place, communicated between his sleeping apartment and the corridor beneath. It was not a task of any

difficulty to discover the parlour, into which, on their arrival the night before, they had been ushered ; for in sober truth that little apartment constituted the whole of what may be termed the public rooms in this unpretending mansion ; nevertheless, Allan was somewhat startled by finding that it contained neither his host of the preceding evening, nor, which concerned him much more deeply, Parson Neil. The sole occupants were three elderly ladies, two of whom appeared busy with their needles, while the third was sedulously engaged in loading a table with bread, cream, cups, preserves, a tea-pot, and other customary appliances to a substantial breakfast. Allan insensibly drew back at this spectacle, as if doubting whether his presence might not be regarded as an intrusion ; but of all apprehensions on that head he was instantly relieved. She who acted the part of Martha intreated him to advance, in a tone of which the genuine kindness could not be mistaken, while all appeared to vie with

one another in their endeavours to convince him that he was neither unexpected nor unwelcome.

Reassured by this friendly reception, Allan did not scruple to join the little party, to which he naturally enough expected that every moment would bring an addition. He took his seat, moreover, at the breakfast-table, though scarcely disguising his surprise that the attack upon that most social meal was not suspended; yet the meal passed over without the arrival of any fresh guest, of whom indeed his hostesses appeared not to expect the arrival. Allan wondered at all this, and at last ventured to ask, what had become of his friend, as well as of the gentleman to whose hospitality they were indebted. The ladies looked first at one another, and then at him, with an expression of which he could scarcely comprehend the import, and endeavoured—at least it struck him so at the moment—to evade the question. But Allan was not thus to be baffled. He repeated

his inquiry in a tone of greater firmness, though still absolutely free from rudeness or suspicion ; and he was again met by an answer, to say the least of it, somewhat vague. “ The gentlemen were no’ very far awa—but these were unchancy times, and mony an honest man was obliged to keep his head in hiding. However, Maister Mac Diarmid needna distress himself about ony friends of his name, who were all safe and valued there, as he might ha’ gathered by what befell the day before, baith at Stirling and elsewhere.” Allan could no longer doubt that he was in the hands of friends, who knew more, both of his own affairs, and of the affairs of his clan, than he did himself. He, therefore, abstained from pressing a point, concerning which they seemed anxious to keep up something like a mystery ; and anticipating from half-hour to half-hour, that the Parson would, in his own proper person, unravel it, he was content to restrain his curiosity within the bounds of good breeding.

The remains of the breakfast being removed, and the ladies addressing themselves to their ordinary avocations, Allan began to think of finding amusement for himself; and with this view spoke of strolling abroad, and examining the scenery amid which chance had thrown him. He was again surprised, when the elder of the three, whom lameness appeared to confine to her chair, threw out serious objections to the proceeding. “It wad be just as weel if he didna gae far fra hame for ae day at ony rate. Nae doubt this was an out o’ the way place, and there might be little danger in indulging his humour; but a single day’s confinement wad do him nae harm, and there were mony reasons why it wad be prudent to put up wi’ it.”

“But, indeed, my dear madam, I am perfectly unaware of any possible reason why I should conceal myself even for a single day. The occurrences of the last four-and-twenty hours have, I confess, astonished me, but they

have in no wise taught me to feel like an outlaw."

"May be no', my dear," replied the old lady, "but young folk hae a great deal to learn. I am an auld body, and hae seen plenty of ups and doons, and hope to see still mair before I die. So ye maun just submit your judgment to mine on the present occasion, and if ye behave weel, ye sal hae your full liberty the morn."

Finding it useless to contest the point, Allan gave himself up with a good grace to the guidance of his venerable hostess. He contented himself, therefore, with looking out from the little windows, which, three in number, afforded three distinct phases to the prospect; and he saw enough, even from these positions, to assure him that, though in the low-countries, chance had brought him into a region scarcely less wild, though totally different from that in which his whole life had been spent. A crag, or rocky hill, of no

great altitude, but striking by reason of its precipitous face, and the forest of aged fir that surmounted it, hemmed in his vision, at a hundred yards' distance, when gazing in one direction. On the opposite side his eye ranged over a half-neglected garden, to a series of sloping grass-fields, at the bottom of which ran an inconsiderable stream; which again was surmounted by a barren upland, terminating in another fir-clad hill, similar to that in his front. The third window again opened out to him little else than a continuance of the same kind of scenery, for it carried his eye down the course of the stream, and along a bleak and uncultivated scene; throughout the whole extent of which, only three or four cottages could be seen, and these at remote intervals the one from the other. In a word, Allan beheld on all sides a striking specimen of the moorlands of Stirlingshire; a county which, though for the most part singularly fertile, and now at least in a state of

high cultivation, is not more than other districts of the sister kingdom, an absolute paradise.

“ You see before you a landscape,” observed the younger of the three ladies, “ upon which true-bred Scotchmen cannot gaze without experiencing a strange mixture of proud and debasing emotions. Far down in the bottom, where the stream makes a bend to the north, is the field of Bannockburn—the scene of Bruce’s immortal triumph, and Scotland’s temporary escape from bondage. That hill to the left is the same from which his camp-followers advanced, bearing their blankets on the tops of poles as banners, and striking dismay, by the sound of their bagpipes, into Edward’s chivalry. But what matters all that now? The memory of these illustrious deeds remains only to cover with disgrace the fallen and degraded descendants of those who wrought them.”

“ Let us houp for better things, Janet,”

interposed the eldest of the three ; “ ye tak owre gloomy a view of affairs. Scotland may yet be herself again ; and though I cannot pretend to the second sight, I think the day is no’ very distant that will see her cast off the yoke.”

“ No, sister,” replied the person now addressed, a woman apparently about fifty years of age, whose regular features and clear complexion denoted that she had been a beauty in her youth ; “ do not deceive yourself ; Scotland may rise against her oppressor, and make another effort to be free, but she will make it in vain. The blood of a betrayed sovereign—of a sovereign sold to certain death, has weighed her down already, and will do so again. Consider what her history has been ever since the fatal paction of Newark. Her native princes exiled, her religion overthrown, her parliament dissolved, her national existence taken away—these have been the just recompense of that sacrilegious act ;—and then, as often as a portion of her sons have striven to

wipe out the stain, how have they fared? Look to the fate of Graham and his brave followers, of Dundee the devoted and the loyal, ay, and of those nearer home, whose heads were blackening but a few years ago over the Long-port of Edinburgh. No, sister, Scotland is fallen, and will never rise again!"

"Ye'll no' say sae, Janet my dear," interposed the more bustling of the three, with an accent of affectionate blandness, which seemed peculiar to her—"Ye'll no' say sae when *he* comes himself, with a gallant array of Frenchmen at his heels, to help our ain lads in the good work."

"Of Frenchmen, Baby!" exclaimed her sister disdainfully; "trust to a broken reed, but never trust a Frenchman. France has never yet stood by Scotland in the hour of distress, and never will. What did Henry for Mary, or Louis the Fourteenth for James? and what will the present Louis do for a monarch, that can give him little in return, except thanks?"

Our forefathers ever found the French faithless, and so will we."

"Aweel, Janet," rejoined the eldest, "it may be as ye say, but it is no' for us to determine how the game is to be played, nor to guide it by our counsels. We can only pray that God will fight for the right; and if he do, all will yet be as we wish. I'm thinking, however, that it's no' just worth while to bum-baze this young man wi' our nonsense; so, if ye like, we'll change the subject, whilk is at all times owre exciting for you, poor thing!"

As she said this, the old lady adroitly turned the conversation into a new channel. She interrogated Allan as to the state of his mother's health, the condition of his native glen, and the circumstances of many of the neighbouring gentlemen, with all of whom she seemed to be familiarly acquainted. Of course, her knowledge of matters apparently so far beyond her natural sphere, excited Allan's curiosity not less than his surprise, and he, in his

turn, began to put a few questions, of which it was the tendency to draw from her an explanation of a mystery to him incomprehensible. But these the old lady cautiously turned aside; and he succeeded in gathering nothing farther than that she had once, in her younger days, known many persons and many places, of which she could now speak only as men speak of their dreams.

In this manner the day passed, Allan striving to conceal a curiosity which became more and more intense every moment, while his hostesses did their best to gratify him in almost every point, save that concerning which he was most solicitous. They amused him with tales of other times, descriptive of the manners of that part of his country which he had not yet seen. They spoke to him of the probable consequences of his sojourn in the capital, and mentioned the names of several persons of consequence to whom they intended to introduce him: nay, they went so far, especially the

eldest of the three, as to throw out an occasional hint that from the son of his father great things would fairly be expected; and hence, that more than an ordinary circumspection of behaviour was required at his hands.

All this served only to whet the edge of that passion under which Allan already laboured. He saw that they knew something of his personal history as well as of the fortunes of his race; and while his conscience told him that the former was but little calculated to command their respect, his natural good sense suggested that the opportunity of reformation was not yet passed away. It must be confessed, however, that the most prominent subject of speculation with him was who these women could be, and by what means they could have attained to all that knowledge which they manifestly possessed? But on these heads he was doomed not, for the present, to be gratified. On the contrary, dinner

came, and was discussed—and tea and supper followed, without either restoring to him his personal liberty or bringing back his friends; and when he retired at night to his “shake-down” in the garret, it was with ideas still more confused than those which oppressed him on the night before.

CHAPTER IX.

SEVERAL days were spent by Allan in the state of ungratified wonderment which marked the progress of that of which we spoke in the last chapter. He continued all this while a close prisoner in the house, learning nothing of the movements of his tutor, and knowing nothing of the adventures which might await himself; yet it cannot be said that time hung heavily on his hands; on the contrary, he found in the characters of his hostesses a great deal to excite his interest, and in their conversation much that was calculated both to instruct and to amuse. There were,

moreover, books within reach—not very numerous perhaps, but exceedingly select; while the youngest of the three ladies occasionally dispelled his ennui, by singing to her own accompaniment on the spinnet a wild air of his native hills. Now Allan, like his countrymen in general, was passionately fond of music, more especially of the strains that connect, in a Scotchman's imagination, his own times with generations long gone by; and as almost all to which he listened here were of this description, relating chiefly to the exploits of Dundee, or the sorrows of that gallant chief's female partizans, the tastes of the young mountaineer were gratified to their fullest extent.

Though they abstained from making him acquainted either with their names or individual histories, Allan gathered from their general conversation that the ladies with whom he associated were sisters, and that they were unmarried. He collected, too, that they were

members of an honourable and loyal family, which had adhered to the fortunes of the Stuarts through evil report and through good, and which was still ready to hazard its all in the attempt to restore the exiled dynasty. Two of them, indeed, carried their personal recollections back to the period of the Revolution, of which, as well as of its immediate consequences, they talked in bitter terms; but the events which, more than any others, seemed to have left painful impressions on their minds, were the union of the Parliaments and the fatal insurrection of 1715. Of the first they spoke as of a transaction ruinous, as well as disgraceful, to Scotland; of the last, as something by which their personal feelings had been lacerated, beyond the power of time itself to heal. To say the truth, however, it was from her whom the sisters addressed as Janet, that Allan heard most of the unhappy affair of 1715. It was a topic to which she continually reverted, and, as it struck Allan, with a degree

of bitterness, such as is, for the most part, occasioned only by the overthrow of some favourite hope; while the others failed not, as often as an opportunity occurred, to withdraw her from the contemplation of objects manifestly too painful for endurance. Thus, though little accustomed to the study of human character, Allan found in his hostesses a great deal to rivet his attention; so much so, indeed, that he became at once unconscious of the progress that time was making, and forgetful, to a certain extent, of the past.

In this manner much more than a week had elapsed, throughout which Allan was permitted no farther liberty than an occasional stroll in the direction of the stream; when, returning one day rather sooner than he had intended, he beheld in the little parlour the same individual who had originally welcomed him to its friendly shelter. Allan was not a nervous youth, yet he could not so far command himself as to conceal the surprise with which the

contemplation of such an object affected him. He started back involuntarily; and though he checked the emotion at once, the smile which played upon the stranger's features convinced him that the movement had not escaped observation. A proud man, however, and Allan was not wanting in that quality, cannot endure to be taken by surprise; he therefore threw into his manner a semblance of the most perfect indifference, and returned the smile with which the stranger regarded him, with a keener and more scrutinizing stare than he had yet esteemed it necessary to employ.

When he first saw the individual in question, the impression produced on his mind was not such as to excite any pressing desire to inquire minutely into his condition or circumstances. Concluding that he belonged to the order of respectable burghers — a class with whom his companion was likely to have formed an intimacy in his youth, Allan took little heed either of his appearance or manner; nor, when

his opportune arrival in the Provost's backshop stood both the Parson and himself in stead, did there occur much to create a different feeling. The part which he had played since was, however, calculated to render him an object of considerable interest; and Allan now examined him closely for the purpose of ascertaining, if he could, whether any, and what species of mystery surrounded him. But he discovered nothing, either in the bearing or dress of the man, to warrant such a notion.

In stature he was above, rather than below, the middle size; robust, and strongly built. His age might be sixty, or perhaps more, though he carried his years well, and seemed capable of undergoing any degree of fatigue; but his bearing was not marked by any peculiarities. There was a frankness about him, and a total absence of servility, which produced a conviction that he must at least be independent in his circumstances; and which

might, for aught he knew to the contrary, be occasioned by a consciousness of superior rank. Nevertheless, Allan could not but acknowledge that his close and somewhat lengthened scrutiny left him pretty much where he was before, except that he received an impression that it was his part to behave towards the stranger at least with modesty, perhaps with forbearance.

The ordinary salutations having passed, the stranger, without pausing to be interrogated, abruptly informed Allan that he was the bearer of a message from Mr. Macpherson, who, for reasons of a peculiar kind, found himself incapacitated from personally conducting his pupil to the metropolis. “He has commissioned me,” continued he, “to send you forward, duly supplied with such letters as may at once introduce you to the society befitting your birth, and place the opportunity of acquiring knowledge within your reach; and very willingly would I have discharged

the trust in person, had not I, likewise, been detained in the west by business of a pressing nature. You will, however, find, that you are not unexpected in Edinburgh, and the credentials which I shall have the pleasure of putting into your hands, will, I trust, serve you in good stead. Perhaps you may discover, when you reach the capital, that more is looked for from a Mac Diarmid than that he should study logic and the classics in times like these; and I will not so far distrust the blood as to imagine that any of the race will be slow in doing his duty. I give no opinion as to the fitting moment when your journey ought to commence. I only beg to say, that whenever you feel disposed to set out, a guide is ready to conduct you and your servant to the place of your destination."

Allan thanked the speaker for his good intentions, and professed his readiness to set out on the instant; but he asked no questions respecting Parson Neil. A two-fold motive

influenced him here. In the first place, he thought that he could observe in the manner of his new friend a disinclination to enter more into particulars than he had already done; in the next, he was not himself particularly anxious to be favoured with a renewal of the Parson's society. After a few words of general conversation, therefore, it was determined that he should abide where he was for that night, so as to commence his journey with the first dawn on the morrow.

There occurred nothing during the remainder of the day calculated in any extraordinary degree to keep the attention of Allan on the rack. The stranger was indeed an object of considerable interest, as well on account of the deference with which he was treated by the ladies of the house, as from the reserve of his own habits; but of him he saw little, for, except at meal-times, he was constantly shut up in his own apartment. His conversation, too, when he joined the family, though per-

fectly gentlemanlike, was marked by a degree of stateliness which checked all approaches to familiarity. He studiously avoided all allusions to himself, to the state of the times, and to his own proceedings. On the other hand, Allan failed not to remark, that, with the respect which they paid to him, was mixed up a great deal of warm and affectionate feeling. This was particularly apparent in the case of the youngest sister, towards whom he seemed to be drawn by a species of sympathy not easy to be defined; for it required but little penetration to discover that there could not possibly exist between them either the tie of relationship, or the bond of a marriage contract.

The day passed over heavily enough, as far as Allan was concerned; and the ladies, after bidding him farewell, withdrew to their chambers. Allan was about to follow the example, when the stranger, who lingered behind the rest of the company, motioned him to remain.

He did so, without however resuming his seat, and assuming an air of indifference, waited patiently till his companion should see fit to open the conference. But he was not destined to be kept long in suspense. As soon as the door was closed, and they were left alone together, the stranger took from his bosom a packet, and handing it to Allan, informed him, in few words, that it contained the introductions to which he had formerly alluded. "And now, Glenarroch," continued he, "I might put an end to this interview, were I not impelled by the interest which I take in all that concerns your family, to offer to you a few words of advice and warning. I will not conceal from you, that with the habits in which you have hitherto indulged I have been made acquainted. Nay, do not start, young man, nor frown, as if the smallest wrong had been done you. I had a right to inquire into the matter, and they who told the truth only did their duty. I repeat then, that with the

discreditable habits in which you have too long indulged I am well acquainted ; and the reserve with which you have been treated ever since you came here, may satisfy you, that such practices are not likely to advance you in the estimation of your father's friends. As you value the honour of the name you bear, look well to yourself in the place whither you are going. Many eyes will be upon you, when you know it not, and your fate, either for good or ill, will be determined probably before you are aware of it. So much for general advice — and now for a hint more immediately concerning individuals. Beware how you lend yourself to any project which shall have for its object the gratification of your own wishes at the expense of another's happiness. There, again, I warn you, that eyes will watch your proceedings, such as you may find it impossible to deceive ; and should you be proved capable of an act so atrocious, you need not show your face again in the society of honourable men."

“And who are you,” demanded Allan, fiercely, “that presume thus to lay down laws for me, who never had the honour of seeing you till the other day?”

“It matters not who or what I may be,” replied the stranger sternly; “it is enough for you to be aware that with the circumstances of your family I am intimately acquainted; and that, for their sakes, if not for your own, I desire to see you different from what you have been. I speak to you as a friend; but I tell you fairly, that whether I am to continue to regard you as such, will depend entirely on the line of conduct which you consider it proper to pursue.”

“If you really know the circumstances of my family as intimately as you profess,” replied Allan, “you must be aware that it is not their custom to value either the friendship or the enmity of mortal man. So far you will find that I am not degenerate from my forefathers. I hold equally cheap both the protection and the defiance that you offer me.”

“ I did not enter upon this subject,” replied the stranger coolly, “ for the purpose of bandying angry words with the son of Glenarroch. Your fate is in your own hands, and the consequences of your conduct, either for good or evil, will fall upon your own head. I wish you a good night. Your servant and guide will be ready to attend you as soon as you please in the morning.”

The stranger was about to withdraw, when Allan threw himself between him and the door. “ We part not thus, sir,” said he. “ Your years, and the peculiar circumstances under which we meet, hinder me from taking up the gauntlet which you have somewhat needlessly thrown down. But at least I will accept of no favours from your hand. Take back your introductory letters. I would rather live alone all my days, than owe my footing in the best society that Scotland can afford, to you.”

“ Allan Mac Diarmid,” replied the stranger in a softened tone, “ I will not take back

these letters. They were written at the desire of your mother ; and for her sake, if not for your own, I must insist on your making a proper use of them. I did not mean to hurt your feelings, far from it—but I do wish to awaken you to a sense of what is due to yourself ; and therefore I speak plainly both of the past and of the future. Much more agreeable would it have been to me, had I been permitted to take the son of my old friend into my closest confidence—but that time may come yet. Good night—and if my manner have appeared harsh, forget it, while you remember only the advice that I have felt it my duty to give.”

Allan was much struck with the mixture of dignity and kindness with which this brief sentence was spoken. Involuntarily his anger gave way, and putting up the packet in his bosom, he answered only with a low bow. Nor was the conference protracted on the other side. When Allan raised his head, the stranger

had already passed him, and mutually saluting one another, they separated; the one traversing the corridor towards a chamber at the further extremity, the other mounting the trap-stair, or ladder, towards his roost in the garret.

The grey dawn of the morning was yet struggling with night, when Allan, whose dreams had been of a confused and somewhat distressing nature, awoke. He rose feverish and uneasy, and descending to the court-yard found, to his no small astonishment, that Callum, of whom he had neither seen nor heard anything since the memorable night of their arrival, was waiting to receive his orders. The poor fellow expressed himself delighted at the meeting, and eagerly demanded when his master would be ready to set out, for the horses, he said, were saddled and ready, and the guide lay sleeping beside them. Now as Allan had received his dismissal over-night, there existed no reasonable obstacle to oppose to the imme-

diate gratification of Callum's wishes. He, therefore, directed that functionary to call the guide and lead out the horses; and Callum obeying with singular good-will, the little cavalcade mounted and set forward.

The first three or four miles of their journey led across a dreary and barren tract, not exactly of moor, but of arid and dry pastureland, overrun with loose stones, and diversified here and there by extensive patches of gorse. This, however, came to an end so soon as they had crossed the stream, and begun to mount the heights which overhang it on the south, on attaining the summit of which, there burst all at once upon the vision of Allan a panorama that excited in no ordinary degree his admiration. The sun rising in cloudless majesty above the tops of a range of low hills, shed down a gush of golden light upon the carse of Stirling. Through the centre of that vast plain, now waving with corn, and beautifully diversified with wood, the Forth wound on his tortuous

way, gradually extending his waters till they became merged in the Frith, over which numerous white sails were plying. Far to the west rose that iron range, from which he had himself so recently descended, blue even in the morning light, and gloriously rugged; while on the north the green Ochils presented a barrier to the eye, less gigantic, it is true, but scarcely less picturesque, certainly not less beautiful. But it was not on account of its magnificent boundaries, nor yet because of the extraordinary richness and fertility of the plain itself, that Allan stood to gaze upon that scene with unspeakable delight. He beheld rising sheer and abrupt, like islands from the bosom of the sea, four or five rocks or crags, singularly alike in their conformation and shape, and all within the compass of three leagues the one from the other. These broke in upon the extensive level, and towering upwards, almost at its centre, carried back the imagination to other times, when, in all probability, their bar-

ren tops were alone seen from amid a waste of waters. Nor let the effect be omitted of the early sunbeams striking full upon the house-tops and battlements of romantic Stirling. In a word, Allan looked round upon a scene, than which it were difficult to discover one more attractive in nature; and in comparison with which, the chastest flight of the most chaste imagination would produce something in a remarkable degree insipid.

Having halted to gratify his feelings, at least as long as his guide appeared to relish, Allan again set forward. He met with no adventure, worthy of repetition, in his way. The little conversation that passed, moreover, between him and Callum, proved, as far as he was concerned, the reverse of satisfactory; for though he discovered that his valet had not, during the past week, been a denizen of the same spot of earth with himself, neither by threats nor persuasions could he prevail upon him to say where his time had been spent.

All that the imperturbable attendant could be induced to communicate amounted to this, that "he had been to mair nor ae place, but whereabouts they lay, and what took him there in truth he couldna tell." Allan became, naturally enough, somewhat sulky under such treatment, and hence, when the goal towards which they were bound came in view, it was beheld without the utterance of a single observation by any of the party.

CHAPTER X.

THE day was drawing to a close, when the travellers, after making a circuit round the base of the rock on which the castle of Edinburgh stands, and traversing the Cowgate, turned to the left, and ascending a steep wynd or alley, emerged into the High-street, not far from the ancient cathedral church of St. Giles. To Allan, who had never before mingled in “the busy haunts of men,” the scene was at once imposing and extraordinary. Crowds of work-people let loose from their daily toils, thronged the *trottoirs*; carriages, carts, wag-gons, and sedan-chairs, passed to and fro over

the causeway, while here and there a group of gallants might be seen, jostling their way, in a state of more than half intoxication, from one "change-house" to another. Then the height of the houses, the breadth and length of the street, the magnificent architecture of the old church,—these, with the curious aspect of the luckenbooths, and of countless objects besides, to which there is scarcely to be found, in other European cities, an exact parallel, could hardly fail of affecting a stranger from the western hills with sensations wholly new. With respect to Callum, indeed, he appeared utterly confounded. He gazed round him with a stare so vacant, that even the guide, though well accustomed to witness the utmost effects of surprise, could not refrain his laughter, which he indulged freely, in consequence of the inability of its object to comprehend in what source it could by possibility originate. Yet when the lowlander, in the petulance of superior knowledge, began to joke

his companion on his presumed inferiority, he found the Celt by no means disposed to accord with his humour.

“Saw ye ever sic a sight as that?” quoth the guide. “Is na that a muckle town?”

“Oo ay,” replied Callum, “the toon ’s well enough—but I wus ye saw the toon of Glenarroch?”

But there was little opportunity afforded for the kind of recrimination which this commencement to the dialogue between these testy personages threatened to produce. In a few moments after gaining the High-street, the guide drew up on the right side of the way, and pointing to the mouth of a close, informed Allan “that doon there Mr. Keelevine staid.” Allan immediately dismounted, and leaving the horses in charge of Callum, followed his conductor to the “land,” in the second story of which resided the gentleman under whose roof he was destined to be, for some time at least, a sojourner.

With the customs of the Scottish gentry an hundred years ago, as they exhibited themselves both in the privacy of domestic life and in public, the English reader is by this time too well acquainted to render any exposition of them necessary here. Let it suffice to state, that Allan found the Writer, a bachelor of some fifty years' standing, hospitable and kind after his own peculiar fashion; that his establishment consisted of a single female servant, a willing and hard-working slave, though certainly not troublesome by reason of over-cleanliness or excess of polish; and that, being expected, he was not the cause of any extraordinary bustle—the never-failing consequence of an abrupt invasion of a bachelor's family. Mr. Keelevine, on the contrary, “wondered what could ha keepit him sae lang on the road,”—“was mickle disappointed that his auld friend and chum didna think it safe to accompany him,”—“and wad hae the greatest-pleasure in the world in doing a' that lay in his

power to mak him comfortable." In a word, Allan felt himself at ease on the instant, and dismissing his guide, to whose custody the horses were entrusted, in order that they might be sent back to Glenarroch, took possession, with Callum as a valet, of a suite of apartments which the Writer had hired for him.

We pass over the occurrences of the succeeding ten days, because they differed in nothing from those which generally attend the first appearance of a young man on the stage of public life. Allan delivered his credentials, was hospitably received by those to whom they were addressed, and partook of such entertainments as it was then the fashion to give—dining for the most part at home—repairing at five o'clock to the ladies' tea-table—and adjourning from thence to some tavern or "change-house," where supper, then the social meal among gentlemen, had been ordered. In meetings of the latter description, indeed, Allan took an especial interest. They suited his

habits exactly, for the men drank deep; and of his taste for hard-drinking we have already had occasion to speak. Yet, though treated with marked kindness at first, Allan saw, or imagined that he saw, even here, symptoms of growing coldness among his new friends. Nor perhaps did he misinterpret the temper of the times. Indulging freely in an occasional *screed*, the Scottish gentlemen of the eighteenth century were not confirmed sots; and as Allan's infirmity grew upon him from day to day, he ceased by degrees to hold his natural place in society.

Soured and disgusted by what he chose to regard as an unmerited slight, Allan gradually withdrew from the company of his equals—and as man “cannot live alone,” chose a set of companions from among the lowest and most unprincipled frequenters of the taverns. His orgies were no longer conducted according to the established usage of gentlemanly sittings. Brandy, and usqueba, in enormous quantities,

became substitutes for claret and canary, while brawls and personal rencontres seldom failed to give variety to the sport. Before the expiration of three short weeks, indeed, Allan had not only disappointed all the hopes of those who took an interest in his welfare, but had sunk in the scale of debauchery and vice below their most dreaded anticipations.

We are not going to offer the slightest apology for behaviour so discreditable. It is beyond dispute, that the principles of honour and right feeling were fast decaying from the young man's mind. The last link between uprightness and utter degradation, the sense of shame itself, scarcely held together; indeed, even Mr. Keelevine, the most submissive and obsequious of Writers, began to throw out broad and intelligible hints, that he had not bargained for such a protégé as Parson Neil had sent him. Yet, let justice be done even to Allan. He saw, or imagined that he saw, that into whatever company he obtruded himself,

all eyes, but especially those of the women, beheld him with disgust. It is true that such efforts as he made to render himself agreeable to the fair sex, were both awkwardly performed and wretchedly directed; nevertheless, the apparent coldness, even of those most indifferent to him, rankled like a poisoned arrow at his heart. The truth is, that like most men to whom some particular defect attaches, he was especially sensitive on the score of that defect. He had taught himself to suspect that by the sheer deformity of his countenance an impassable line was drawn between him and the purer and better feelings of his nature; nor was there a circumstance, however trivial in itself, however distinct from the bent of his overheated imagination, that he did not twist and bend into a confirmation of that, his most abhorred suspicion.

So far a general sense of wrong, if we may venture to use the phrase, had influence in giving a turn to his tastes and character.

There were, however, other thoughts, still more poignant, as well as more continually at work, that drove him to seek for refuge from present misery in almost any resource. Allan still doated upon his cousin. By night and by day her image was uppermost in his mind, except when the whirl of dissipation momentarily drowned it; and as there accompanied it only the bitter reflection that she had renounced him for ever, it is scarcely to be wondered at if he should seek to steep his memory in the most poisonous dregs of forgetfulness. We have spoken of Allan as a proud man. He was so, in the worst sense of that term—for pride and selfishness were with him convertible terms. In every respect save one,—in point of birth, connexion, personal merit, and manners, he considered himself entitled to the love of any girl whom he might choose to address. He believed also, that there was a time when his influence, where alone he cared to exercise it, was paramount; and he ima-

gined that the case might have been so still, but for an accident. But when he beheld the reflection of his scathed visage in the glass—when he looked upon that countenance, blasted and disfigured by disease—proud as he was, the acknowledgment burst from his very heart, that Marcelly could not be blamed if she loathed him. In few words, a deep and overwhelming conviction that God had dealt unfairly by him—a persuasion that he was marked by an especial providence as an outcast from his kind, haunted him like an evil spirit continually, and drove him, in absolute desperation—in the very spirit of defiance to his Maker and his laws—to commit crimes, from the bare idea of which he would have otherwise shrunk.

Desperate as he was, and reckless of the opinion of the world, there was yet one principle about Allan which neither time, nor an enlarged intercourse with profligate society, succeeded in rooting out. For his mother he

continued to entertain the most profound reverence. Whatever might have been the case with others, she at least had never turned her back upon him. No—when the hand of God fell first and most heavily upon him—when all besides shrank from him as something polluted and impure, he remembered that his mother's eye still beamed on him with kindness—that her tongue uttered accents of affection and support alone. For her, therefore, his devotion continued to be, what it had ever been, boundless. There was no sacrifice that he would not have cheerfully made, had she but required it—there was no act which he would have failed to perform, had its performance promised to increase her happiness. So far, indeed, was the feeling carried, that even in his wildest humours, a hint that his mother would receive pain from some meditated outrage would suffice to restrain him. Unfortunately, however, the single being who possessed any real influence over him, knew not how to exercise it

for his good. In her eyes he was all that a mother could desire her son to be ; and hence she not only failed to restrain him in his career of evil, but totally discrediting that such a career was begun, encouraged him to follow it up, by ministering to the accomplishment of his most extravagant wishes.

Among other matters, from a due acquaintance with which Allan's education had almost unavoidably kept him back, was a knowledge of the value of money. Requiring but little to supply his wants in Glenarroch, yet accustomed to have these wants fully gratified, Allan continued to deny himself nothing when in the metropolis ; and as a necessary consequence, dissipated his slender supplies in an inconceivably short space of time, besides running up scores in more than one quarter. No great while elapsed, ere he began to feel the effects of this. Tavern-keepers an hundred years ago were like tavern-keepers of the present day, but little disposed to give unconscionable credit ; and

hence Allan, whose debts chanced to accumulate chiefly at the quarters whither the desire of “drowning care” drove him, soon began to find himself but an unwelcome guest even there. It is said that when a horse becomes fairly bogged, he never thinks of drawing back, but flounders on till he is totally lost. In like manner, Allan followed the usual proceeding of young men situated as he then was; and believing his affairs to be desperate, took exactly the steps that were calculated to render them so.

In all countries, and at all periods of their history, the common resource of men who love dissipation and lack the means of purchasing it, is play. In Edinburgh as well as elsewhere, and an hundred years ago equally as now, the opportunity of indulging that propensity lay within the reach of such as might seek it—nor was Allan long left to exercise his ingenuity in considering how it behoved him to proceed. He had early become a member of more than

one of those clubs or associations, the avowed purpose of whose existence was to kill time and seek amusement. Into the Horn Order he was introduced by one of its leading members ; and he entered for a time, with heart and soul, into its follies and vices. He now enrolled himself in the Hell-fire Club ; and soon became, in point of recklessness, and an utter disregard of all ties human and divine, a prominent performer in that outrageous company. But Allan, though a rash and eager gambler, was no match in point of skill for those with whom he associated. Like other pigeons, he won small sums at first, only that he might lose them again with interest ; till in the end the means to which he had trusted for the purpose of repairing his broken fortunes, put the last seal to his ruin.

CHAPTER XI.

AMONG the many “strange companions” with whom his habits brought Allan into contact, there was one in particular to whose generosity he had on various and pressing occasions been indebted. Who or what that individual might be, no one appeared to know; except that he played skilfully — was by his dialect an Englishman—spent his money freely, and put up, sometimes at one place of public resort, sometimes at another. In person he was handsome, that is to say, tall and well-proportioned. His features were regular, and his hair dark and clustering; in short, his appear-

ance was altogether such as would scarcely fail of inducing even a careless observer to look at him attentively. It is highly probable, however, that the effect of a close and critical examination would not have been favourable to him. A sallow complexion, with a peculiar cast of the eye—a disinclination, as it seemed, to look you directly in the face, gave somewhat of a sinister expression to his countenance, which was not removed by a certain habit which he appeared to have, of watching with an eagle's glance the movements of those around him, as often as their attention chanced to be turned to other objects. Yet was there nothing absolutely repulsive, either in the bearing or manner of this man. He was, on the contrary, polite almost to servility—slow of speech, and peculiarly guarded in the expressions which he employed ; qualities which kept him clear from giving as well as taking offence, under circumstances in which quarrels were somewhat hard to be avoided.

Hatfield, for such was the name by which the Englishman was known, had frequented the gaming houses of Edinburgh long before Allan made his appearance there. From time to time, indeed, his companions missed him, for he absented himself occasionally for three months at a stretch; but he never failed to return in the long run with the same abruptness that had marked his departure. It was understood, moreover, that though on speaking terms with all the most dashing black-legs about town, he honoured none of them with his confidence; nor, as far as any one knew, had he ever admitted them to the rites of hospitality. Equally remarkable was it, that though no one could accuse him of playing unfairly, he was almost always successful; and that too in the face of chicanery, which on more than one occasion he had exposed. The consequence was, that while they eyed him askance, the professional frequenters of Allan's Close, Halkerston's Wynd, and such other

resorts of the profligate, could not presume to insinuate any charge against him, on the strength of which he might be ejected from their society.

Either design or accident so ordered it, that of the particular parties among which this individual was included Allan frequently formed one. They played against each other too on all occasions; and Allan invariably came off the loser. For a time he paid his debts, and while the scanty remittances which he received from home enabled him so to do, paid them in money; when these failed, notes of hand were substituted, which Hatfield accepted readily, and for the redemption of which he appeared nowise urgent. Encouraged by this seeming forbearance, Allan pursued his fatal course, till there hung over him a load, of the amount of which he was scarcely aware—nay more, he stooped so low as to accept at the hands of this stranger several direct loans, in order that he might satisfy the demands of some other and

more pressing creditors. It is true that these advances were made, not only without reluctance, but with a cheerfulness of manner well calculated to lessen the load of obligation; nevertheless, fallen as he was, Allan could not look back upon such transactions without the deepest self-condemnation. By degrees, indeed, thought became torture to him, and solitude hell. A mesh was woven round him, of which he felt the pressure, but from which he saw no possibility of escape; and hence the single object of his exertions was to stifle reflection, by plunging still deeper into the abyss.

In proportion as his affairs approached a state of utter ruin, the few principles of honour which had survived his reckless career in the Highlands, faded one by one from Allan's mind. Hitherto his play had been marked by no unfair dealing. He watched his game attentively, and staked his money where he imagined the chances to be in his favour—he now

began to admit the idea, that much more than this might be hazarded. Long and anxious hours in each morning were in consequence devoted to a study of this new branch in what may be termed his profession. He threw the cards into every imaginable combination; he practised slight of hand till he became an adept in the arts both of substitution and abstraction; and, above all, he put violence on his humours, and acquired the power of abstinence at will, both from bursts of passion and the use of exciting potations. In a word, by dint of intense study, he made himself master of those secrets which are not often laid bare to the solitary inquirer, and having screwed his courage to the sticking-place, he proceeded to carry into practice the lessons which he had learned in the privacy of his own apartment.

The first steps which men take in vice, more especially in those particular vices which the world is prompt to condemn, are taken with fear and trembling. Allan exercised his skill

for a time under the influence of an agonizing excitement. He did not venture to look round, lest his eyes should meet the suspicious glances of the company, and he took care to select as his instruments, those alone whose want of experience rendered them peculiarly open to his attacks. He succeeded beyond his expectations. Night after night fortune favoured him by throwing in his way some raw youth, over whom, heated by wine, it was no hard task to triumph; nor could he discover that the faintest suspicion of his integrity was entertained, either by the sufferer himself, or the lookers on. As a necessary consequence, Allan became, day by day, more satisfied with the course which he had adopted. Each successive trial gave him fresh courage to embark upon a new enterprise, till he learned at last to smile in the face of his victim, while deliberately consigning him to destruction.

Though they sometimes expressed their surprise at the turn which his luck had taken,

Allan's gambling friends dropped no hints injurious to his character as a man of honour. They saw, indeed, that he came sober to the table, and they passed their jokes on the probable motives which induced him to do so; but neither by innuendo, nor even by gesture, did they raise a suspicion in his mind that they understood the nature of his play. All this was highly satisfactory to Allan, who began to anticipate the possibility of a release from the bonds in which his pecuniary obligations held him towards Hatfield. But as yet he studiously avoided coming into direct collision with that individual. There might, perhaps, be a lingering of good feeling here: it was not quite satisfactory to engage with unequal weapons a man from whom he had received so many favours; and as to meeting him on other terms, that a long experience proved to be useless. Nevertheless, a regard to truth compels us to acknowledge, that good feeling alone did not sway him. Once or twice, just as some juggle

had taken effect, Allan's eye chanced to encounter that of Hatfield, and he imagined that there was in the latter an expression of strange import, which he would not venture to analyze too closely. The fact however is, that Hatfield's sidelong glances resembled those of no other man besides. There was always a twinkle in his eye—a peering, prying, cynical leer, as if he sought to read, not the workings of his neighbour's countenance, but the very thoughts of his heart; nor was it possible to meet that glance, without becoming aware that such was its object—we had almost said, without being conscious that the object was attained.

Time passed, and his nightly labours sufficed not only to supply Allan with means of subsistence during the day, but gave him hopes of retrieving his fallen fortunes. There remained, indeed, but one creditor from whom he was not entitled to demand a release—that creditor was Hatfield, who, though still for-

bearing to the greatest degree, had dropped a few hints of late, that restitution of sums lent would be agreeable, and Allan determined that even at the hazard of detection, he would seize the first favourable opportunity that might offer to satisfy him. Again fortune stood his friend. A stranger, an accidental lodger at Middemas's, chanced to commit himself to the tender mercies of the club. From that individual, who staked his money rashly, and appeared wholly ignorant of the chances, Allan succeeded in winning several large sums, which he carefully set aside, with the view of putting all, at some convenient season, on a single hazard.

It was on a bracing December night, the ten o'clock drum having just begun to beat, and the closes, lanes, and alleys of Auld Reekie still affording a few minutes of safe passage to the lounge, when Allan, who had sat later than usual at a debauch, entered the Pandemonium in Carrubber's Close, where he had already spent

so much of his time. It was an under-ground flat, to which the victim descended by a flight of stone steps, so narrow that two persons could not by possibility pass one another, and so steep, that the slightest blunder of footing must have precipitated him to the bottom. To the uninitiated it presented the appearance of an ordinary oyster-cellar; that is to say, a mean apartment, fitted up with one or two coarse tables, on which stood large dishes of pandores, received the stray wanderer to a rude hospitality—but the secrets of the place lay beyond. Allan, indeed, scarcely paused to look around him as he traversed this exterior banqueting hall; but passing through a doorway in rear of the counter, entered at once upon a totally different scene.

On each side of a long passage ran a suite of two rooms, furnished solely with the view of accommodating the lovers of sport. One, containing a billiard-table, was lighted, according to immemorial usage, by means of sconces fas-

tened round the walls; in another, dice and dominoes, with their usual accompaniments, prevailed; the remaining two were set apart for the convenience of such gentlemen as might prefer the more scientific diversion of cards. They were, one and all, mean and filthy to the greatest extent. Chairs, broken in the backs, deal tables, stools and forms, composed the furniture of these apartments. The floors were bare, except that a coat of sand crimped beneath the feet; the walls and ceiling were black and dingy—a hue to which the incessant smouldering of tallow candles could hardly fail to bring them; while the atmosphere, made up of every conceivable mixture of horrid airs, struck to the vitals of him who encountered it. Yet Lucky Bawden's in Car-rubber's Close constituted, an hundred years ago, the most fashionable place of resort to the roués of the Scottish capital; vice appearing there, and claiming her votaries, not as now disguised under the garb of refine-

ment, but in her native deformity and coarseness.

Neither dice nor billiards presented any attractions to Allan, who cast but a passing glance at the players, and walked forward to the card-rooms. He entered the nearest, but found that every table was occupied, by men whose flushed countenances and breathless silence told how engrossing was the interest attached to their respective pursuits. Somewhat chagrined, and not without apprehension that he had lingered too long over the supper-table, he hurried on, and pushing open the second door, looked round. There was one table vacant here, and one only, beside which five or six gentlemen were collected, as if undetermined whether to take their seats or to abstain. Allan advanced, for the purpose of sharing in their deliberations, which he would have decided at once, by proposing a game at brag; but a second glance showed him that both Hatfield and the strange En-

glishman were among them. A sudden qualm came over him as his eye rested on the figure of the former, and he stopped short.

“ You are in excellent time,” observed Hatfield, addressing himself to Allan ; “ we were just about to commence operations without you. Brag, too, your own brag is the order of the night ; so come and take your seat among us.” Allan did not feign, for he really felt a strong disinclination to accept the challenge. Never, since the commencement of his novel style of play, had he encountered Hatfield, under whose sardonic gaze, indeed, he more than once felt his courage quail ; and even now, though the single choice lay between doing so and standing idle, he hung back. Nevertheless, the raillery of his friends prevailed—he sat down next to Hatfield, and disguising the agitation which he found it impossible wholly to suppress, gave up his attention, as well as he could, to the progress of the game.

For some time fortune appeared to deal out her favours with great impartiality. Men won and lost again, according as chance directed; and Allan, like the rest, could count on few gains, till the spirits of the party rising with the progress of the game, bets were doubled and trebled without hesitation. Cautiously, yet with lynx-eyed care, Allan watched his opportunity. The reader need not be told that there is no game upon the cards which gives to the dealer greater facilities of cheating, undetected, than brag. Allan turned these to the very best account. Repeatedly the ace of diamonds turned up to his own hand, when the odds had been taken largely that no such occurrence would befall; and more than once it occurred that a pair of aces fell to his share, even when others distributed the cards. It was not to be wondered at if Allan's confidence should increase in exact proportion to his success. He played more and more boldly, called for brandy-punch, of

which he drank a considerable portion, and followed up his course of victory with great effect, till his gains amounted to something not far short of the sum which would have sufficed to clear up the accounts between himself and Hatfield. The goal was thus brought distinctly within view, and in order to insure its attainment, Allan urged his Pegasus to its last degree of speed.

It so happened that throughout the evening's entertainment, Hatfield had uniformly backed Allan in all his wagers. Allan now challenged Hatfield with reference to a hand which he was himself about to deal, and the other accepted the challenge, to the amount of all his adversary's winnings. The deal proceeded. The players had secured each his two cards—the third was in the act of distribution—indeed all, except Hatfield and Allan himself, had been supplied, when the former leaning towards the dealer, said in a low whisper, “Beware!” Allan shook in his chair. He

cast a hurried glance towards the speaker, whose eagle-eye watched him with an acuteness not to be deceived ; and after a vain effort to recover his self-command, went on with the game. Hatfield's card was high—it was the ace of clubs—decidedly the best that had been thrown ; and, as was usual on the occurrence of such a piece of good luck, a murmur, expressive of different passions, burst from the lookers on. Again Hatfield took advantage of the momentary confusion. “ It won't do with me, throw away your hoarded diamond, or I will expose you ! ” This was uttered in a suppressed tone, yet it penetrated the brain of the listener like an arrow. He did drop his hoarded diamond, and turning up a five of hearts, saw his gains pass on the instant, into the possession of his former creditor. Allan's senses became confused. He gasped for breath, and leaning back in his chair, remained, for the space of three seconds, totally unconscious of all that was passing around him.

Perhaps there is not, throughout the compass of what is called civilized society, a spectacle more humiliating than that of a company of persons engaged in deep play. Not only is each regardless of the feelings of his neighbour, but, as it would seem, blind to their very existence ; for gestures the most extravagant, and exclamations harrowing to common ears, pass in such cases absolutely unheeded. Overwhelming as Allan's dismay and confusion were, they escaped all eyes in that excited assembly, save those alone beneath whose petrifying glance he found it impossible to hold up. Yet it was to no purpose that he roused himself to appear calm. His forehead burned as he gazed elsewhere round the table, and it became deadly cold again, when he observed the hellish leer with which Hatfield watched his very looks. His skill totally forsook him. He played on, therefore, but it was absolutely at random, without ingenuity, almost without an aim. He accepted every bet that

was offered, and we need scarcely add, that nine out of ten proved unfavourable. Allan's brain reeled, his throat was parched and dry,—he called for brandy, and drank it off in despair. But the measure to which he had recourse as an immediate relief from misery, served only to increase the fever that boiled in his blood. He could not succeed in steeping his senses in forgetfulness, so as to become callous even to the events that passed around; and hence, though rendered fierce and dangerous to any who might inadvertently thwart him, he was still responsible for his actions, and liable to be treated as one that was so.

Notice has been taken of the success which for some time back had attended Allan's play, more especially when he was opposed, as chanced to be frequently the case, to the strange gentleman, of whose very name he was ignorant. To-night, the reverses of that individual were amply and rapidly made good. Instead of receiving the challenge, he gave it

with a tact obvious to all, save the party most deeply interested; and at the close of each hand, Allan became more and more deeply his debtor. At last a settlement of accounts was demanded; Allan held up his empty purse, and uttering a few common places, customary on such occasions, proposed to give, what he himself professed to consider as equivalent to money, a promissory note. But the stranger declined that species of security. He had no wish to insinuate anything disrespectful of the gentleman; he did not doubt that the gentleman's bond was negotiable anywhere, but he always settled his own debts of honour in hard cash, and he made a rule of treating others as he desired to be treated by them. Allan's eyes flashed fire. He struck the table violently with his clenched fist, and starting from his seat, demanded to be informed whether his credit were questioned.

“Undoubtedly not,” replied the stranger coolly. “No man can possibly call in ques-

tion the credit of one, beside whose chair there lies even now security to a much larger amount than the trifling sum due to me."

"It is your ace of diamonds," whispered Hatfield; "the fellow has somehow seen it. Collect yourself, or you are undone for ever!"

With the speed of thought, Allan planted his foot upon the fallen card, and resumed his seat, in a frame of mind that beggars all description. Baffled, detected, on the very brink of exposure, stripped of all his gains, and plunged more deeply than before into difficulties, it is no wonder if he should have regarded his situation as one that admitted of no remedy. It was to no purpose that he made several efforts even to speak. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth—he could only fix a vacant and glassy stare upon the stranger's face, and remained silent.

"I think, Sir," interposed Hatfield, addressing himself to the importunate winner, "that you scarcely deal with this gentleman as

his case deserves. You see that his ready money is gone, yet you object to receive the only equivalent for ready money which it is in his power to offer. I can only say, that were I in your situation, I would take his note-of-hand freely."

"Then you will not, mayhap, object to add your signature to his?" rejoined the party appealed to.

"We are not in the habit here of requiring security for debts of honour," replied Hatfield coldly, "nor would it become me to innovate on the customs of the place. But rather than see a man of honour put to inconvenience, I would myself become his banker, did he request it."

"Will you indeed?" asked Allan in a low and husky tone. "After what you have seen to-night, will you again befriend me?"

"I will," rejoined Hatfield in a whisper, "notwithstanding all that is passed; sign this blank bond, which we can fill up at our leisure

—we are pretty much at home by this time in the form—and the means of stopping that scoundrel’s mouth are yours.”

“How shall I ever be able to repay your kindness?” exclaimed Allan, eagerly grasping at the paper, and affixing to it his signature.

“Leave all that to me,” rejoined Hatfield, as he put the deed in his pocket, “and pay him what you owe, for God’s sake. The cur yelps after his money like an untrained beagle after a drag.”

Allan took with a trembling hand the purse that his companion conveyed to him, and told out the amount of his losses to the last guinea; but neither his strength of body nor vigour of mind carried him farther. He started from his seat, and hurrying through the room, rushed with the step of a maniac into the street.

CHAPTER XII.

THE bells of several churches struck two as Allan emerged from the head of Carrubber's-
Close and entered upon the High-street. It was a clear, calm, frosty night in December ; the moon sailing bright and beautiful amid a host of attendant planets, shed over tower and town a flood of mellowed light. St. Giles, with its picturesque and elegant crown, glittered like a thing of silver ; the tall houses, some in bold relief, others in deep shade, assumed the character rather of a painting than a reality ; nay, even the Luckenbooths stood forward, with their rougher points softened down, as objects of admiration. Yet was

Allan alike unconscious of the splendid beauty of the night, and of the magnificent architectural scenery by which he was surrounded. He looked up into the deep blue sky, but his thoughts were all earthly ; he gazed upon the moon, but it was with the vacant stare of a man careless or ignorant of all external objects ; and though his pace gradually slackened, the turmoil and tumult of his brain went on as fiercely as before. Allan felt that he was every way a ruined man ; and he who feels this is necessarily indifferent to all other considerations, either of mind or matter.

Unconsciously, he had taken the direction that conducted towards his home, and was already advanced within a few yards of the head of the Wynd, when a hand laid gently upon his shoulder arrested his farther progress. Allan started, grasped at the hilt of his sword, and turned round, but instantly let it fall again when he saw that it was Hatfield.

“ You quitted us too abruptly,” said the

latter. "Your losses were severe, I acknowledge; but fortune might have turned in your favour in spite of all, had you trusted her a little longer. Besides, you drew towards yourself the eyes of the whole company, and the result has been the reverse of favourable to your future chances."

"What matters it?" replied Allan, in a low and husky tone. "What have I to do with future chances? I played my last card to-night, and played it fatally. I am utterly ruined, and you know that I am so!"

"It is too true," replied Hatfield, his voice softening into the accents of commiseration; "that unlucky attempt, of which from my soul I regret taking any notice, has, I am afraid, destroyed you for ever. How came you to try so stale a trick upon me? and above all, why leave the proofs of your intended juggle within the reach of a whole company?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Allan.

"Mean? why, that in your hurry you left

the ace of diamonds where you dropped it, to enlighten the gulls all round as to the means which have been used in fleecing them."

"God of heaven ! what do I hear?" exclaimed Allan ; " I am discovered then, known to all men as a cheat and a swindler,—is it not so ?"

" I cannot deny it," replied Hatfield ; " nor may I conceal from you, that the less you show yourself in public, at least for a time, the better."

Allan staggered against the wall of a house, and groaned heavily. He had imagined the cup of his misfortunes to be full ere this terrible announcement was made ; he now acknowledged that it needed one drop more to produce an overflow. But he was not left absolutely to his despair. Hatfield drew his arm through his, and in the kindest manner entreated him to bear up even under this last and most tremendous blow. " Your situation is not an enviable one, Mac Diarmid ; at least, it is not one which those would envy by whom

the smiles of the world are greatly valued. I know not how far this may be your case, but for myself, as it has not been my fortune to experience much of the world's kindness, I have long learned to look with perfect indifference upon its hate. You must do so also, and then the world and you will be on equal terms."

Allan answered only with another groan.

"But I speak, perhaps," continued Hatfield, "to one brought up in the lap of luxury, and accustomed from childhood to all the endearments of domestic life. To you, love has doubtless been propitious. The bonds of friendship have encircled you; ease, comfort, station, respectability, are your's; prospects of perfect happiness, of an old age spent with the object of your boyish passion, amid the caresses of children's children—all these things have hitherto rendered life agreeable, and as a necessary consequence, given value to the world's good opinion. If it be so, then indeed I speak to little purpose; for——"

“If it be so!” cried Allan, and he laughed loud and bitterly. “Ay, if it be so indeed. But it is not so. No, Hatfield, you see before you a wretch, accursed from his infancy, branded by his Maker as an outcast, shunned and hated by his kindred, the object of loathing and disgust to—to—to—God! what have I to do with the world? what are its smiles or its frowns to me? I tell you that I hate all mankind; and that if I regret this terrible exposure at all, it is because it robs me of the means of wreaking my vengeance upon the accursed race.”

“Aha!” exclaimed Hatfield exultingly; “does the land lie thus? Why then, cheer thee, my friend: we are brothers in wrong—we shall be brothers in revenge also—that is, if you are willing to put yourself into my hands, and to be guided by my counsels.”

Allan looked at the speaker, over whose features a strong ray of moonlight chanced to fall. There was a remarkable expression there—not

so much of pity, though the tones of his voice were evidently modelled to that feeling, as of anxiety ; and, as it appeared to Allan, of subdued, yet palpable triumph. On any other occasion, the young man would have turned away from that glance in disgust ; but now, a thorough sense of his own degradation, accompanied by a deadly rancour towards the whole animated creation, made him indifferent to all minor considerations. “ And what would you with me ? ” demanded he. “ I am too much indebted to you already ; add but this act of kindness more, and I am your slave for ever ! ”

“ No, no ! ” replied Hatfield ; “ not my slave, but my friend ! You shall go foot for foot with me in the prosecution of many glorious undertakings. Society shall be our world of action—its members our prey ; and we, like Lords of the forest, will hunt them as we need them. Does the one desire the attainment of any particular object ?—the counsel, the purse, the arm of the other are ready to forward

it. Does the other seek to wipe out the memory of some wrong?—his friend will return the obligation—ay, were it even in the blood of his own father. These are the terms on which we may live, on which we shall live, provided you have courage enough to cast yourself entirely free from certain scruples, which are too apt to hold even the bravest minds in thralldom.”

“Hatfield,” replied Allan sternly, “I am a desperate man, and your proposals are such as you would not venture to make except to a desperate man. But I accept them without reserve. Lower than I am already, even in my own estimation, I cannot fall. The world has set a mark of exclusion against my name. Those whom I love with the purest devotion, hate me. I have many wrongs to avenge upon my species, and I am yours.”

“You answer as I expected,” rejoined Hatfield; “yet even now I would not hurry you into any rash engagement of which you might afterwards repent. Take time to consider

what you are about to do, and weigh well the sacrifices which you must make. Are you of the number of weak mortals that believe in the excellence of what is called ‘truth?’ But I need not ask that question. No man plays as you have done these last two months, till he has learned to estimate as they deserve, the high-sounding phrases, ‘honour,’ and ‘probity.’”

“There is too much justice in what you say,” replied Allan, while he shrank at the same time from the admission; “my deeds speak for me,—I have neither honour nor probity to renounce.”

“It is well; for believe me, that never did the craft of knaves invent bugbears more perfectly contemptible, when examined closely. Then there is gratitude—another fool’s bauble—how may it operate with you? Would the remembrance of kindnesses done long ago, restrain you from seeking an immediate gain or

gratification, by sacrificing, if need be, your fancied benefactor ?”

“ I owe no human being the recompense even of thanks,” replied Allan, “ except it be yourself, and—my poor mother. Bid me not do wrong to her,—and with all besides, use me as you will.”

“ Your mother !” ejaculated Hatfield, with a slight intimation of contempt : “ we make no war upon women, except for their own benefit. But, omitting your mother from our list, tell me, does the child’s night-mare conscience exercise so strict a dominion over you, as that the mere tie of relationship should stand between you and your wishes ?”

“ My nearest relative is my deadliest foe,” replied Allan fiercely ; “ yet there are reasons why I should deal tenderly by him. I would not willingly injure the father of one — whom ——”

“ Oh, I see what you mean,” interrupted

Hatfield, "and I acknowledge the justice of your reasoning. You are personally concerned in stifling a passion which under other circumstances you would indulge. In plain language, it is more agreeable to your own feelings that you should abstain from cutting your relative's throat, than that you should cut it."

"You are a strange inquisitor," rejoined Allan, smiling bitterly, "but not the less acute on that account. God knows, I owe little either to him or her, yet I could not wrong a hair of his head, did life itself depend upon my doing so."

"Well, well! so long as you are wise enough to resolve everything into the grand leading principle of human action, it matters not, as far as our compact is concerned, how that principle shall operate in particular cases. Reverse this picture then, and imagine that the ruin of your enemy—ay, or even his death—would put you in possession of this particular prize which you so much covet. Have

you courage enough to attempt the one, or effect the other ?”

Allan paused for a moment, as if weighing the jewel against its price ; and then said in a hurried accent, “ There is no crime that I would not perpetrate in order to secure the prize to which you allude.”

“ All this is well ; and now I have but one more question to put. You say that you are a desperate man, and I believe that you are so, as far at least as a total derangement of his pecuniary affairs can render any man desperate ; for there are in my hands bills and bonds to an amount far beyond what I take to be your means of settlement. In character, too, you are utterly ruined. There is not a frequenter of Bawden’s that would speak to you ; you cannot presume to show your face there ; and from the other haunts, of what is called society, you have long been excluded. I gather likewise, from your own lips, that your mistress is unkind, your friends faithless, and yourself an

abject. I believe, therefore, that you say no more than the truth when you speak of your case as desperate.”

“ And why throw all this in my teeth ? ” demanded Allan, as his whole frame shook with contending passions. “ Have I not acknowledged that I was desperate ?—what gratification can arise to you from thus breaking the very bones of your victim on the rack ? ”

“ Gratification ! none whatever. I merely recapitulated certain facts as affording ground to believe, that you took no more gloomy view of your own condition than it deserved. I would not willingly inflict pain upon one whose case I commiserate from the bottom of my heart, and whom I desire to befriend to the utmost of my power. Answer me then ; desperate as your fortunes are—scorned by those whom you love, shunned even by your companions in vice, does there linger in your mind any womanish pity for the race to which you belong—any more than womanish reluctance

to seek, from henceforth, your own ends, no matter by what means, so as they are attained ?”

“ I repeat, that I feel as a desperate man, and as a desperate man I am prepared to act.”

“ And then as to the phantom of which priests talk—that future state, which no man has ever seen—that retribution, of which, in this world at least, proofs so scanty are exhibited—are you capable of looking upon that with the eye of reason ?”

“ If by looking at these things with the eye of reason you mean an absolute disbelief in the existence of a Providence, and a world beyond the present, as yet, Hatfield, I have not acquired your philosophy.”

“ I am not surprised at that,” rejoined Hatfield, sneeringly. “ This same Providence has dealt so bountifully towards you, that it were ill your part to dispute its supremacy ;—and then your prospects in that particular world—which I have never seen, and from which, as far as I can learn, no specific mes-

sage has yet been received—are so very brilliant, that it were strange indeed, could you be brought to barter them away for any sublunary gratification. The martyrs were fools, compared to such as you, for they sacrificed only life—you all the pleasures that can make life valuable.”

“ I am no fit subject for any man’s raillery,” exclaimed Allan, “ and I warn you to beware how you exercise the talent upon me. My belief or disbelief is a matter for my own consideration alone. As far as you are concerned, it may suffice to know, that I can set God as well as man at defiance, and that I have done so already.”

“ Well, well,” replied Hatfield, “ we will not continue the subject farther to-night. You have opened out your feelings sufficiently to assure me, that our sentiments on most subjects accord ; it may be, that we shall become still more intimately connected by and by. In the mean while I would not have you judge

too harshly either of me, or of the species of contract into which I desire to lead you ; for though to attain our objects we must be guided by a moral code of our own, that code is founded strictly on the dictates of nature. At all events I have been, and still wish to be, your friend. Go home, and let the reflection that you have one friend in the world, comfort you in your miseries. Avoid public places for a time—it may be troublesome to you to be recognized,—and when you stand in need of advice or assistance, demand both from me, and they shall be afforded. And now, good night!”

“ One word more,” exclaimed Allan, as he held the hand which the other extended towards him. “ Though your language is strange, and your manner startling, I would not part from you without knowing when and where we are to meet again. How shall I proceed, cut off as I am from our accustomed haunts, in order to discover you ?”

“ When you desire to see me again—that is, so soon as you have made up your mind either to accept or to reject the alliance which I proffer, come to the ruins of St. Anthony’s chapel, two hours before midnight : whistle twice, and unless there occur something extraordinary to prevent it, your signal shall not remain long unanswered. Once more, good night !”

As he spoke, Hatfield extricated his hand from Allan’s grasp, crossed over to the darkened side of the way, and darting down one of the lanes or closes that branch off towards the Lawn Market, was lost to the view in a moment: Allan stood still for a few minutes to recover his composure, and then hurrying forward, let himself quietly into his lodging.

CHAPTER XIII.

It is necessary that we should interrupt, for a brief space, the thread of our history, by carrying back the reader to the sequestered haunts of Glenarroch, and laying before him a general outline of the events which befell there, subsequently to the departure of Allan Breck for the low country.

It will be seen from the account which has already been given of the parting interview between Allan and his mother, that a new light broke in upon the mind of the latter, so soon as she had made herself mistress of the real state of her son's feelings. The irregularities

in his conduct, which all her partiality had failed to conceal, were now sufficiently accounted for. His moodiness—the irritability of temper which he occasionally displayed—his distaste for home, and the society of the gentlemen of the clan—were no longer mysterious to her. The young man loved—his suit had been rejected,—and high-spirited as he was, who could wonder that he should seek to escape from the mortification of his own thoughts, were it in dissipation itself? No; if Allan were really what his enemies represented him to be, and that he stood not wholly clear from the charges was certain—the misfortunes could be attributed to one cause alone. Remove that cause, and the disease arising out of it would cease. Allan must be saved—no matter at what sacrifice on the part of all the world besides.

We stated some time ago, that on the morning of that day which witnessed the commencement of her son's journey, Mrs. Mac Diarmid

had spent some time in private conference with Parson Neil. Of the purport of that interview, it is scarcely necessary that any detailed notice should be taken. Aware of the deep-rooted affection which the Parson bore to her husband's memory, and convinced that, if he desired one thing upon earth more than another, it was the welfare of the house which had so long sheltered him, she did not scruple to lay bare to him a good deal, at least, of the project which occupied her own mind. She told him exactly how Allan was situated—she implored him to assist with his advice and influence, in removing what she could not but consider as the groundless prejudices of her niece; and she pointed out, that not the peace of mind alone, but the respectability and eternal welfare of her son depended on the accomplishment of that object. She was not deceived in the estimate which she had formed of the degree of interest with which the Parson would listen to her tale. He heard her to an end with the

most profound attention, and then entreating her to believe, that, if by the sacrifice of his own life he could promote the welfare of his benefactor's orphan, he would cheerfully lay his head on the block, he proceeded to discuss the particular question then under consideration.

“ You speak of my influence and advice in removing your niece's prejudices. Alas ! my dear madam, how little would either avail. Besides, though I am ready to make any personal sacrifice in your son's favour, is it possible for me, as a man of honour and a clergyman, to recommend the committal of Marcelly's happiness to the care of Allan—as he is now ? ”

“ And why is he what you represent him to be ? Have I not proved to you that his irregularities, or vices, if you will, all originate in one source ? Make him what he once was—give him back that personal beauty of which

the hand of God deprived him, and let Marcelly look upon him with the same eyes which she turned towards him ere that calamity befell, and if I know aught of my boy's disposition at all, he will be every way worthy to become the guardian of her happiness, or of that of any other woman that breathes."

"It may be so," replied Parson Neil, "though you must pardon me, if I add, that many symptoms of a wayward temper showed themselves previous to the occurrence of the misfortune to which you allude. But, however that may be, is it not right that he should first of all give proof of an inclination to curb his humours, before she shall be solicited to link her fate with his? And even then, who can hope to control a woman's will in such a case as this?"

"Is it by you that I am to be answered thus?" demanded the lady, in a tone which partook as much of wounded confidence as of

offended pride. “ I did flatter myself that Neil Macpherson would have accounted a woman’s will, particularly on such a subject, as nothing, when brought into competition with the eternal welfare of his friend’s orphan.”

“ I have told you before, madam, and I repeat the statement, that gladly would I perform any thing of which a man of honour is capable, were my doing so to promote your happiness, or that of your son. But have I the power to aid you here? What influence have I over the maiden?”

“ Much more, perhaps, than any other person that lives. You have trained her to habits of gentleness and self-denial; you have taught her that her own comforts ought to be freely sacrificed, in order to promote the welfare of others. She has, on all previous occasions, believed your assertions, and acted on the principles which you have inculcated. Tell her that an opportunity offers now of practising that

great lesson, which it behoves her, for her soul's health, not to neglect. Assure her that the eternal, as well as the temporal welfare of Allan—nay, that my temporal and eternal welfare—the eternal welfare of one who shielded her infancy, and was to her more than a mother, hang in the balance. Adjure her, as she values her own peace of mind, not to reject the boy's suit. Is he not every way worthy of her—is he not already bone of her bone, and blood of her blood ?”

“ Indeed, my dear madam, you impose upon me a task, to which I am not competent ; and from which, if I be any judge of human character, no good result could accrue. Marcelly is a gentle, but she is a high-spirited and right-thinking girl. She has heard more of your son's vices than you have done ; nor is she one to be persuaded that her duty demands from her such a sacrifice as you would have me urge her to make. No, no, madam, I cannot undertake to address her as you wish ;

and I am sure that were I to do so, my entreaties would not avail."

"Neil Macpherson," said the lady solemnly, "am I to believe that you do really desire the welfare of my house above all other earthly things?"

"I could not till this moment harbour a suspicion that you should have doubted it."

"You say that you are ready to lay down your life in our service. That we do not require—but would you sacrifice something less than life—would you put violence on your own feelings for a time, in order to benefit us for ever?"

"There is no sacrifice of personal feeling that I am not ready to make in your service."

"Is it quite certain that Marcelly can never be persuaded to this union?"

"So convinced am I of that fact, that I should account it the sheerest piece of folly to enter upon the task of persuasion."

“ Yet the match would be advantageous to her in a worldly point of view. Allan is an only child—there are neither sisters nor younger brothers to be portioned off; and the lands, though somewhat wasted, are wide, and the followers faithful.

“ All this is true, madam, yet I question whether the circumstances would weigh one jot in guiding Marcelly’s determination.”

“ And as to his vices, as you call them—what are they? The mere ebullitions of youth. Follies, excesses, which years will certainly check; and which need but this single act to destroy them in the bud. His heart is good, and his disposition noble—is it not so?”

“ I am willing to believe that you say no more of him than he deserves.”

“ Well then, you cannot imagine that a young woman is hurried into a connexion unfavourable to her own happiness, if she be prevailed on to wed a man so circumstanced. You are neither so young nor so romantic as

to believe, that love before marriage is essential to happiness afterwards."

" There may be, and I doubt not are, many cases, where persons marrying as you describe, have found no reason to regret that they did so."

" Well then, taking all this for granted; and presuming always—what has not yet been proved—that the girl were inexorable to argument and entreaty, you could not say that any serious wrong was done, were a little gentle compulsion exercised in bending her to her own advantage. Such things have occurred before now on the north side of the Grampians."

" I am not ignorant," replied Parson Neil coldly, " that this and other outrages have been perpetrated in our country. But I never heard the practice defended; and I trust that I shall not hear of its being renewed."

Mrs. Mac Diarmid looked at Parson Neil with a stern yet penetrating glance. She

saw that his brow was darkened ; and conscious that she had gone somewhat farther than it was prudent to do, she strove to divert his suspicions from her real design.

“ You mistake,” said she ; “ I am far from vindicating the deed, when perpetrated, as it has been, by open violence. I spoke only of such compulsion as a parent has a right to exercise, and to which a child that knows her duty never fails to submit.”

“ I am the last man in the world,” replied the Parson, the frown passing from his countenance, “ to impose limits on the paternal authority. There is but one power superior in degree to that of a father over his child—the power of the Creator over the creature. So long as the earthly parent shall exercise his undoubted privilege, subject to the will of the common Parent of all, neither human laws, nor what is termed public opinion, have a right to interfere. But it is the first law of nature, that a parent shall not exercise cruelty

towards his offspring; and you, my dear madam, would be loud in condemning the monster that disregarded that law."

"It may be so," rejoined the lady hurriedly, "though much depends on the interpretation put upon the phrase cruelty. However, we will not discuss the subject farther. I have told you how both Allan and myself are circumstanced; that his happiness, nay his respectability, depends on his union with Marcelly; and that I cannot know a minute's peace while I am aware that he is miserable. I ask of you no more than that you will join your influence with mine in seeking to bring about an event which will render the widow and the orphan of Norman Mac Diarmid happy; which cannot affect injuriously any human being besides. Am I justified in advancing this petition?—is it such as you can conscientiously grant?"

"I cannot tell you, my dear madam, how much I am distressed, both by the terms of

your request, and the manner in which you urge it. You ask me to use my influence towards the attainment of one particular object, with which any interference in me would be justly considered by the other party as impertinent; and you press the matter, as if with me rested the power to decide one way or the other. How am I to answer you? If I say that I cannot accomplish your wishes, you will doubt my inclination to obey you. If I say that I will not so much as endeavour to cheat a young girl, whom I love as my own daughter, into the perpetration of a deed against which her heart recoils, you will accuse me of base ingratitude towards the house of my patron and benefactor. And above all, you address me in the tone, and with the manner of a suppliant. How am I to meet all this? For God's sake, spare me the pain of meeting it at all; and if my advice have any value in your eyes, abstain, at least for the present, from prosecuting your design far-

ther. As Allan's character now stands, neither Marcelly nor her father would listen to the proposed union for a moment. Let a year or two pass over his head—let him acquire other and better habits in the place to which he is going, and then leave the young people to arrange the matter for themselves. Marcelly is a sensible girl. The mere defects in his features will never weigh with her in an affair of so much importance; nor is it impossible, that when she finds her cousin what he ought to be, in reputation and moral conduct, the partiality of her childhood may revive. At all events, do not urge me, under existing circumstances, to stand forward as the advocate of one, my first duty towards whom is reproof and correction."

Mrs. Mac Diarmid saw, that to continue the subject with one who entered into it so unwillingly, would serve no purpose. She, therefore, observed, with a good deal of bitterness, that she had expected other things at

his hand ; but that, doubtless, he knew best how far it became him to interfere in matters of so much delicacy. She then led the way to the parlour, where, as has been already shown, breakfast was consumed in no very cheerful or talkative mood by any of the party.

CHAPTER XIV.

MORTIFIED at the failure of an attempt on the success of which she had confidently relied, Mrs. Mac Diarmid abstained for a while, after her son's departure, from seeking any other indirect means of influencing the inclinations of her niece. She controlled herself, moreover, so far as to shun a direct appeal either to Marcelly or her father; towards both of whom, indeed, she began to experience feelings different from those which were wont to animate her. But the heart-rending and sorrowful letters which at intervals reached her from Edinburgh, gradually overcame her

scruples. Both pride and prudence gave way under the influence of strong maternal affection; and though her heart revolted at the thought, she determined to become herself a suitor to the girl whom she had reared as her own.

Marcelly, whose affection for her aunt fell short only of the love which she bore to her father—if, indeed, it fell short even of that—spent a portion of every day at Glenarroch. The cloud which sat on her relative's brow, and which she naturally attributed to grief occasioned by the separation from her son, the kind-hearted girl strove by the display of a thousand winning arts to dispel; and soured as Mrs. Mac Diarmid's feelings were, the natural attentions of her niece did not always fail of producing their effect. There were moments, indeed, when the associations connected with times gone by exercised their full force over her; and she would kiss Marcelly through her tears and pray Heaven to bless her; yet the

recollection of Allan's miseries would return even while the words were on her lips, and she would shrink back from the embrace which she had herself invited. All this occasioned much distress, as well as a good deal of anxiety to Marcelly, who would not permit herself to believe, either that Allan had made a confidant of his mother, or that, if he had, the circumstance could produce the slightest change in her aunt's sentiments.

It was on a beautiful morning in October when Marcelly and her aunt were strolling along the margin of the loch, that the post, a functionary who reached the district once a fortnight, put a couple of letters into the hand of the latter. She looked at the superscriptions of both, and perceiving that one came from Allan, she sat down upon a rock and hastily opened it. As she read on, Marcelly did not fail to perceive that the expression of happy eagerness which pervaded her countenance at first, gradually faded away.

A cast of bitter sorrow succeeded; her cheek flushed, and became pale again; and a single tear, round, large, and unbroken, fell upon the paper. Mrs. Mac Diarmid was not generally given to weep. Her passions, though violent, rarely showed themselves as the passions of women are apt to do; and perhaps she suffered the more intensely, because her sorrows were secret. But on the present occasion Nature had her way. She laid down the letter upon her knees, and burying her face in her hands, wept bitterly.

“Dearest aunt,” exclaimed Marcelly, throwing her arm round her relative’s neck, and joining her own tears with those which stole from between the mourner’s fingers—“do not weep so. I never saw you shed tears except when some dire calamity had befallen; for Heaven’s sake dry them now, and whatever evil tidings that letter may bring, take comfort—God may yet convert them into joy.”

“Never, Marcelly,” replied her aunt, sobbing bitterly. “There is no hope of joy for the widowed bosom on this side the grave. I am broken-hearted, Marcelly, and there is but one being in existence that can heal the wound—but from that quarter I have no hope.”

“Do not say so, dear aunt; Allan may yet become all that you could desire. He has gone astray, I allow; but he is young, and a little further intercourse with the world will doubtless cure him of his weaknesses. He is well, I trust, and happy.”

“Of his health, Marcelly, I am told nothing; I, therefore, presume that he is well—but as to happiness—no, girl, Allan is the most miserable wretch that breathes the air of life.”

“I hope not,” replied Marcelly timidly, “I am sure that he ought not to be so; I do not know any thing that can render him so, except it be himself.”

“ There again you are in error, if, indeed, I may speak of that as an error which is hardly grounded in mistake. Allan is miserable, but his miseries may all be traced back to another source than himself.”

“ He takes too much to heart the personal deformity with which it has pleased Providence to visit him,” replied Marcelly ; “ but,” and her voice faltered, “ I trust the time may come when better thoughts shall enter into his mind.”

“ Marcelly,” said her aunt solemnly, “ why all this equivocation ? Why attribute an effect of which you are aware, to causes with which it is in no way connected ? You, child—you who were the companion of his boyhood—you, whom I nurtured with the same care—whom I loved with the same tenderness as if you had been my own—you, Marcelly, are the cause of Allan’s misery, and mine. Allan loves you, doats upon you, and you have rejected him !”

Marcelly gasped for breath, and was silent. The tears which had chased each other down her cheeks were arrested in middle course, and she could only gaze upon her aunt with a subdued and a beseeching eye. The latter continued—

“ Yes, Marcelly, I have at length communicated to you the secret which has preyed upon my vitals ever since I became acquainted with it; and unsuitable as the act may be, here, on my bended knees, and in the sight of Heaven, I implore you to take pity both upon me and my son. By all the anxious hours that I have devoted to your infancy; by the many sleepless nights that I have spent beside your cradle; by the endearments of early days—the fondness which grew with your growth, and strengthened with your strength; by that warm and motherly love which I bear towards you still, I entreat you to have mercy upon me! Allan, my only child—Allan, the son of your father’s friend—

Allan, the widow's hope, woos you for his bride. Reject him not, as you hope for peace when you become a mother yourself, or desire to save this overloaded heart from breaking."

"Oh rise, madam ! my dear dear aunt, rise, I beseech, I entreat you. Let me kneel to you ; but oh do not you kneel to me ! I will do every thing that you wish—I will become your menial—I will toil for you by night and by day—I will cast myself, if you desire it, into the deep water below our feet—but oh, do not, do not ask me to become Allan's wife !"

"And why not, girl?" replied Mrs. Mac Diarmid, rising. "Why not become the wife of Allan Mac Diarmid ? Is the blood in your veins purer than his ? Has your father's name been heard where his father's was unknown ? Is he a bastard and an outcast, that you should contract aught of contamination by linking your fate with his ?"

“ No, no, dear aunt ; he is every way my equal—my superior, if you will—for he is a man, and I a weak girl. Yet I cannot be his. No, no, I cannot, cannot, God is my witness.”

“ Cannot ! That is an expression which I do not understand. Say that you will not, and then you speak plainly—no matter what the consequences of your determination may be.”

“ Alas, what an unfortunate creature am I,” exclaimed Marcelly, the tears again bursting from their fountain, “ to be the cause of unhappiness, where I would lay down my life to bring peace ! Oh, my God, what have I done, that I should be thus visited !”

“ Yet it is in your power, dear Marcelly, to heal the wound. I will not press you to a pledge. I do not now ask you to give your faith to Allan ; but at least assure me that you will strive to overcome that antipathy which has too much hindered you from

seeing him as others see him. You are not a worldly girl, I know. I would not, therefore, speak to you of matters so debasing as settlements; but consider, I pray you, how a union between your father's house and his must affect the interests of both in this country. And then, think, that not his happiness alone, but his respectability, his character, his soul's health itself, are all, all at your mercy. Speak the word, Marcelly; say that you will give to my proposal more mature consideration, and that hereafter, be it years hence——”

“Oh no, no, dear aunt, press me no farther,” interrupted Marcelly; “I cannot, may not promise that which will never be fulfilled. Allan knows the state of my feelings perfectly. As a sister, as a friend, I will strive to regard him, but more than that I could not do, were life and death in the balance. Allan will see in the Low Country girls fairer and more attractive than me. Some one of these will drive

my image from his thoughts; and may God grant that it be done speedily !”

“ It is well, Marcelly,” replied her aunt proudly, “ it is very well. I am answered as I deserved to be, when I so far forgot myself as to bend these stubborn knees before my sister’s child. You reject my entreaties, you despise my arguments; you hold at nought the wretchedness which I have laid open to you—perhaps somewhat too weakly. But you mistake, girl. Allan’s happiness is not a thing to be thrown away for the indulgence of a child’s humour or a woman’s caprice. Your father shall take this matter up; and if his regard for the memory of one who fought and bled that he might sleep peaceably at home, be what he says it is, you will find that a harder task awaits you than the mere rejection of my counsels.”

Mrs. Mac Diarmid turned away as she spoke, and walked haughtily in the direction of Glenarroch. She drew back from the grasp with

which Marcelly would have detained her, and paid no heed to the exclamation of profound grief that burst from the maiden's lips. Marcelly was totally overcome. She shed tears abundantly, and with a swelling heart and tardy pace returned home.

For some days after the occurrence of this adventure scarcely any intercourse took place between the families at Glenarroch and Ardmore. Depending little upon that appeal to which she had referred rather in pique than under the serious expectation of profiting by it, Mrs. Mac Diarmid experienced a strong disinclination to hazard it, though she continued to hope almost against hope, with the pertinacity which persons usually display when driven, as it were, into a corner. Not that she trusted all to the result of her brother-in-law's interference. On the contrary, as she had long harboured certain vague notions of arrangements to be moulded into form only in a last extremity, so she began now seriously

to look around for fitting instruments by which to realize her day-dreams. But before any effectual steps could be taken towards the accomplishment of these wishes, an explanation was forced upon her, which overthrew at once whatever of reliance she had thus far ventured to repose on the partiality of Ardmore towards the memory of his friend.

The depression of spirits under which his daughter laboured, as well as the sudden cessation of her visits to her aunt, had not failed to attract the attention of Ardmore. He demanded an explanation, which was given fully, though not without some reluctance on the part of Marcelly; and anxious to set the matter at rest for ever, he sought an immediate interview with Mrs. Mac Diarmid. It was not of the most conciliatory nature. His nephew's delinquencies were too well known to Fergus to render him over-delicate in the tone of his remarks; and, like his countrymen

in general, he was apt not to affix more than their legitimate value upon the feelings even of a mother. He flatly informed Mrs. Mac Diarmid, that were Norman himself to rise from the grave and request his consent to the proposed union, he would refuse it. “It is not that I think more harshly than need be of the common follies and excesses of youth. Many a wild colt has turned out a noble war-steed, and Allan may, perhaps, redeem even yet his character. But I tell you fairly, sister, that rather than see Marcelly joined to him as he is, I would follow her to her grave. I should be sorry to hurt your feelings—but such is my determination, and by G— I will keep it !”

“And with what have you to charge Allan, beyond the ordinary follies of youth? Of what has he been guilty, that even his father’s friend should turn his back upon him?”

“Guilty!” exclaimed Ardmore, warming as

he went on ; “ there is scarce a crime that man could commit, there is not a meanness into which man can fall, that he has not perpetrated. What ! give my child to the tender mercies of the most cruel and perfidious monster that ever disgraced the name of Mac Diarmid ! Go and ask old Donald Dhu where his grandson lies, and bid him tell you who sent him there. Inquire of Lochiel whether this hopeful son of yours have not by his violence and fraud endangered that which is of more importance by far than all the blood in his body. No, no, sister—the follies of youth may be got over, but murder, and violence, and treachery to boot—not to mention a depraved taste even in the choice of associates—these do not come under the head of youthful follies.”

“ Is it to me that all this is said,” demanded the lady, with much warmth, “ the widow of Norman Mac Diarmid, and the mother of his son ? And am I thus reviled, and

the honour of my name impugned by one who has received some kindness even at these poor hands, when he most needed it?"

"Sister, sister," replied Ardmore, "I mean no offence to you; I cast no reflection upon your honour, or that of your name. I only tell you in this private room what is openly told by one to another throughout the whole country; and I do so from no other motive than to convince you, if I can, that there are strong reasons why I should put no force on my daughter's inclinations. Zounds! were the young man as beautiful as Apollo, and as noble in his nature as Lycurgus, I would still leave the girl free to have him or refuse him at her own pleasure."

"Then there remains no alternative," ejaculated Mrs. Mac Diarmid, bitterly; "I had hoped that things would not come to this—but God's will be done, I cannot help it."

"Ay, now you speak like a reasonable woman," rejoined Fergus. "There is no

help for it, indeed. It is a pity, perhaps, that the boy should have taken this idle fancy into his head, over and above all the other crooked ways that he has ; but if the last could be as easily set straight as the first, we might yet expect to see him filling his father's brogues. But however that may be, there *is* no help for it. Marcelly shall choose a husband for herself, when she is in the mind, and neither you nor I will trouble ourselves to choose one for her."

So saying, the good man rose, and perfectly convinced in his own mind that he had brought his sister to reason, wished her good morning. "As to what I may have said about Allan's infirmities, don't let that distress you. It is too true every word of it—but he is away from the reach of scandal now, and when he returns, let us hope that he will come back a new man. Marcelly shall spend her mornings with you as usual, and her evenings too occasionally. Only no more tormenting the girl

about Allan. All that is at an end, and, as you justly observe, there is no help for it." He had walked down the avenue all this while, and before his sentence came to a close was already considerably out of hearing.

CHAPTER XV.

EVERY one who happens to have read Captain Burt's Letters from Scotland, or the late excellent General David Stewart's "Sketches of the Characters and Manners of his Countrymen," must be aware that there existed among the Scottish Highlanders a few generations ago, ties not less enduring, in many instances infinitely more tender, than those of mere relationship. The children of a gentleman's family were then rarely nursed at home, but committed, for the most part, to the care of some married woman, in whose fidelity the parents could repose implicit confidence. As

the act of rearing the young laird was an honour much coveted by all the retainers, so the affection entertained towards him through life, not by his nurse alone, but by her husband and children, knew no bounds. The old couple with the appellation of his foster father and mother—their offspring recognized as his foster brothers and sisters—claimed ever after to hold the most important places about his person; and besides being honoured by the clan, were ready at all moments to obey his behest, no matter how great the sacrifices they might be required personally to make. Even life itself has been repeatedly given away, not by one, but by a succession of foster brothers, in order to secure the safety of the chief; and as to any minor requisition, it must be of a strange nature indeed, did these, the devoted servants of his will, hesitate to obey it. In one word, there was no law of God or man—no bond of nature or of habit, which they regarded with the degree

of absolute devotion of heart and feeling bestowed upon their chief; whose caprices they would gratify, whose interests they would seek to promote, through evil report as well as good, by foul means as well as by fair.

As soon as her brother-in-law quitted her, Mrs. Mac Diarmid, after devoting some minutes to deep, and as it appeared, painful thought, threw a mantle about her shoulders, and walked abroad. She took on this occasion a direction opposite to that which she had followed when Marcelly was her companion; and crossing a low shoulder of the hill, at the base of which the house of Glenarroch was placed, descended into a bleak and boggy glen, surrounded on all sides by mountains. At the farther extremity of that wild hollow, stood a single shieling, composed of loose stones, partially daubed with clay, and roofed over with bunches of long heather, laid one above the other in the rudest possible manner. A couple of apertures in the wall, partially stuffed

up with fragments of old plaiding, served to admit as much of light and air as the inhabitants appeared to desire; while a sort of wicker or basket-work hurdle, supplied the place of a door, beneath the lintel of which, even a well-grown boy must stoop, ere he could gain admittance. Not a tree nor a shrub of any description grew around that hovel. Garden, too, there was none, unless, indeed, a patch of light soil, amid which some abortive attempt had been made to rear a few potatoes, may be considered as such; for neither pot-herbs nor vegetables could find depth enough of earth to grow; and as to ornamental vegetation, that, of course, was wholly out of the question.

Towards that miserable hovel, planted at the farther extremity of an extensive moss-hag, and closed in on three sides by a rough and precipitous corry, Mrs. Mac Diarmid directed her steps. That the shieling was inhabited, a thick volume of peat smoke,

which issued as well from the windows as from a hole in the centre of the roof, gave evidence. Nevertheless, no living thing might be seen to move about its locale. Neither children nor pigs—no, not even the universal attendants on a Highland bothy, a few barn-door fowls, clustered around its site; the aspect of which conveyed, to the very extreme of the feeling, a sense of utter and dreary desolation. It appeared, however, that to the dreary aspect of the place the lady was not unaccustomed. She advanced firmly, and pushing back the wicker door, found herself at once admitted within the penetralia of this dark abode.

For a moment or two, the effect of so sudden a passage from the clear light of day to so dim an atmosphere, deprived her of the full power of vision. She saw, indeed, burning in the middle of the chamber, a dull turf fire; beside which, upon a low stool, sat a human figure; but the smoke which curled up to the

rafters, and then fell down again in dense volumes, totally prevented her from determining whether the occupant was a man or a woman. Nor, in truth, had she been a stranger here, would her judgment have received any effectual assistance from the tones of a low wild song, which, in a cracked and hoarse voice, the individual in question was singing. But Mrs. Mac Diarmid was not a stranger here. She advanced, after a moment's pause, towards the fire, and laying her hand on the singer's shoulder, said—

“ Look up, Elspeth, look up, and listen. There is evil to the house of Glenarroch, and the widow of Mac Diarmid comes to thee for advice and assistance.”

“ Oich, oich !” replied the old crone, raising her sightless eyes towards the speaker ; “ who comes to old Elspeth now ?—who are you, and what is it that you want ?”

“ Do not you know me, Elspeth ? Has the sound of my voice become so strange to your

ears, that you cannot recognize it? Have the clouds of old age passed so thickly across your eyes, that they are unable to distinguish your own foster daughter?"

"Is it indeed you, my honoured lady—my own darling child?" cried the hag, rising as she spoke, and extending her long, bony, and smoke-dried hand towards Mrs. Mac Diarmid. "What brings you to old Elspeth, and alone too, without the following that befits the widow of Mac Diarmid? Alas! were my brave boys living now—But no matter, the sword and the halter have left one to serve you still; and my curse shall wither him in his youth, if he hold back in your hour of need. Sit, lady, sit down and tell me all that affects you; for well I wot it is affliction only that drives you to seek counsel of me."

"You have had but too much reason to complain, Elspeth," replied Mrs. Mac Diarmid, drawing a stool close to that of the old woman, and sitting herself, in order that the other

might not be kept standing. “Mac Diarmid was, perhaps, too strict, too stern if you will, considering the relation in which the culprit stood towards me, and as a necessary consequence towards himself. But the deed is done—it cannot now be recalled; and the lapse of sixteen long years has, I hoped, taught even his mother to forget, that Hemish Mac Ichan died neither in the battle-field, nor in his bed.”

“Forget, lady!” exclaimed the old woman; “think you that I shall ever forget? Oh, no, no! The eagles love their brood, the foxes love their young, and poor and old, and despised though I be, my offspring are not less dear to me than theirs are to them. Had he perished as his brother did, in open and fair battle—nay, had any mouth but that of Norman Mac Diarmid sealed his doom—harsh, and cruel, and undeserved as that doom was, I might have forgotten it; but never, while the sands of life run, shall I or can I forget that dark and dismal day when the child of my old

age died the death of a dog. Ohon! ohon! Hemish the fair-haired, Hemish the fleetest foot, the stoutest arm in all the glen!—that the crows and the vultures should have fed upon thy flesh, given to them too by ——”

“My dear Elspeth,” interposed the lady, “let us not revert to a transaction which, whether justifiable or not, I would now give all that I am worth to recall. Have you not been revenged? How long did Norman survive that act of stern, though perhaps, merited severity? But let that pass for the present. I am here, Elspeth—I who drew the stream of life from your breast—broken-hearted, and in the lowest depth of misery. Will you wreak your vengeance on me?”

“On thee, my own darling? No, so help me Heaven! Neither to thee, nor to aught that belongs to thee, does Elspeth desire evil. Norman himself I have forgiven—long, long forgiven—because he was the husband of my child; for thee, say how I can best prove the

devotion which I bear towards thee, and I will obey thy wishes."

"Then hear me, Elspeth. My son, dear to me as the light of heaven, is rejected by one whom he has long wooed. Her father, instead of urging the girl to her own happiness, supports her in her obstinacy, and Allan is driven dishonoured from his home and his kindred. Elspeth, say how it becomes Mac Diarmid's widow to act, and tell me how the son of Mac Diarmid may be rendered happy, and saved from total ruin."

"I too had a son," replied the old woman, reverting to the original subject of their conversation—"a son, who was to me a thousand times dearer than light and life—but where is he now?"

"Oh, Elspeth!" interrupted Mrs. Mac Diarmid, "if you do not intend to drive me mad, recall your thoughts from that black image. Speak to me not of the past, but of the present. Your griefs are beyond human power to

redress—mine may be ameliorated, provided I can find one true friend among all that have eaten Mac Diarmid's bread, and profess to revere his memory."

"That do not I, lady!" cried the beldame fiercely, as she turned her sightless balls and shrivelled countenance full towards her foster-daughter: "Mac Diarmid's memory is accursed, and will be accursed, by her whom he robbed of her child. And as to his bread—have I eaten it? has any one in whose veins my blood flows, eaten it—since that dark hour?"

"Then God help me!" exclaimed Mrs. Mac Diarmid, rising and wringing her hands. "My very foster-mother forsakes me—I am deserted indeed!"

"Not so, dear child," cried the old woman, holding out her hand as if to detain her; "thou art not deserted, at least not by me;—but if I am to serve thee in aught, never speak of the memory of one, whose name I have sworn not again to utter,—because I cannot bless, and

would not willingly curse it. What would you of me? Ask for yourself, and the hand that now detains, will be held in the fire till it consume away, provided such be your pleasure."

"You have one son left, Elspeth—an out-cast from his clan, it is true, and, if report do not belie him, a man of desperate habits. Is your control over him what it once was? will he obey your mandates when you issue them?"

"Will he!" exclaimed the old woman proudly;—"will he not? He dare not disobey, and would not if he dared. But what of him?"

"Demand for him what reward you choose,—restoration to the place which he once held in Mac Diarmid's family—a return to the lands which his father occupied—anything, every thing which it is in my power to give, and it will be granted on a single condition."

"And what is that condition?"

“That he contrive to carry off Marcelly and hide her in some remote place till, either by persuasion or otherwise, she consent to make Allan happy, and herself respected. Will Ranald do this act of kindness at his mother’s bidding?—not for Mac Diarmid’s son, but for his own foster-sister—for thy foster-daughter?”

“Lady,” replied the old woman, after a long pause, “you have laid a heavy burden upon me. *I* can forgive Mac Diarmid’s offspring, because they are the offspring of one to whom these withered breasts gave suck; but Ranald is fiery and relentless, and his brother’s murder has never passed, and will never pass from his mind. For thee, individually, he would do all that man can do;—but to promote the welfare of Mac Diarmid’s son,—can I expect such a sacrifice at his hands?—ought I to require it?”

“Then mock me no more with protestations of affection!” exclaimed Mrs. Mac Diarmid indignantly; “it was not from thee that the

fountain of my young blood was supplied. No—I was in error when I looked for support, even in my last extremity, from one on whom I have no claims—on whom I never could have had the shadow of a claim. Farewell, Elspeth; and may God and thine own heart forgive thee, as freely as I do!”

“Stop, stop, madam!” cried Elspeth eagerly; “I did not reject thy bidding, harsh and ungrateful though it be; neither did I say that Ranald would reject it. But the sacrifice is almost too great for human nature: I only doubted whether it were just to desire it at his hands. You shall not, however, be deserted. Though my heart recoil at the idea, I will lay my commands upon Ranald, and I have deceived myself, if even here he refuse to obey them.”

“Elspeth, I am thine for ever. Accomplish this object, on which all our hopes of comfort depend, and may Heaven deal with me and mine, as we forget or remember that

we owe every thing to thee! When shall I see you again?"

"Ranald returns to-night," replied the crone—"at least such was his assurance when he set out. If my lady do not object to visit her nurse again to-morrow, she shall know how he stands affected."

"Then to-morrow, about this time, look for me. Farewell, Elspeth—be urgent, and all will yet be well."

"All will yet be well!" exclaimed the old woman, as soon as the receding sound of Mrs. Mac Diarmid's footsteps made her aware that she was alone. "Yes, it is ever thus. We have no feelings to respect, no hopes to gratify, no longings to appease. The poor vassal must live for his lord, and die for that same lord too, whenever the fitting moment comes; but as to consulting his own inclinations, or seeking his own profit, that were a crime never to be forgiven. And had not I a mother's claim as well as she?—did I not lay bare this

aching bosom, and pray for the life of my son—ay, even to her whom that bosom nourished—to no purpose?—No—I was told that in the administration of the laws women could not interfere; that Mac Diarmid was inexorable, and that, painful as the sacrifice was, private feeling must give way to a sense of public duty! Yet she comes to me, now that there is grief at home, and requires that the brother of Hemish shall put his own life in jeopardy, for the purpose of obtaining a bride for the son of his brother's murderer! And I have consented to this. Well, and am I not bound to sacrifice every thing for her? Has she not drawn her substance from this withered breast—is she not twined around this broken heart by a cord which no injuries, no wrongs will ever be able to loosen? Hemish, if the softness of thy mother's yielding offend thy gallant spirit, forgive her; but she cannot act otherwise than she does; for even thou, her eldest and her best, wert

not more dear to her soul, than is the child whom she reared from its mother's womb."

These words the old woman uttered aloud, as if incapable of exercising the powers of thought apart from the faculty of speech. It appeared, however, that the act of soliloquising brought with it a soothing effect; for her ideas soon ran back again into another channel, and she resumed, as if nothing had occurred to interrupt it, the low wild song which she was in the act of singing when Mrs. Mac Diarmid entered.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHILE these events were passing, both in Edinburgh and Glenarroch, Parson Neil, whose unlooked for separation from his pupil has been glanced at rather than narrated, was acting no unimportant part on the great stage of public events to which our history refers.

In spite of the signal defeat which their cause had sustained in 1715, and of the proscriptions and confiscations that followed, the Jacobites, as the adherents of the house of Stuart were termed, ceased not to encourage a confident anticipation that a second restoration would yet be effected, and themselves, as

a necessary consequence, rewarded for their fidelity. Neither the abortive affair of Glenshiels, nor the overthrow of the numerous plots which ensued upon it, tended in any material degree to change their views or repress their expectations. So long, indeed, as the King's government resisted, however feebly, the policy of the new dynasty, and held back from rendering Great Britain the mere treasury of the Electorate of Hanover, the Jacobites, if they lost none of their original supporters, made little progress in the art of proselytising. But in proportion as this wise and just policy was abandoned, men's eyes began to be turned with anxiety and desire towards the survivors of the ancient race. Nor was the undisguised partiality of the two first Georges to their hereditary dominions the sole, nor perhaps the principal, cause of discontent throughout the nation. The South Sea scheme, whilst it brought ruin upon multitudes, and gave a serious shock to public

credit, operated as all panics do, in rendering even such as escaped the danger, distrustful of the resources of a Government, under which so gross a delusion had been practised. In like manner, the imposition of a malt-tax led to serious discontent, particularly in Scotland, which the subsequent enactment of the excise laws tended in no degree to diminish ; while the disarming act rankled in the breasts of all on whom it affixed the mark of disgrace, rendering more hostile than ever the bravest and most warlike portion of the Scottish people.

With so many and such palpable grounds of complaint to work upon, it would have been strange indeed, had the advocates of indefeasible hereditary right failed to stir up heart-burnings and jealousy of the powers that were, in all quarters. Plot after plot was concocted and arranged, only that it might be abandoned ; for many an agent of the Stuarts moved about unsuspected, because his real

designs were concealed under the ordinary guise of conspiracy—a devoted attachment to the people's rights. But though the intriguers were thus busy, they by no means stood alone in a feeling of soreness, to call it by no stronger term, towards the existing Government. Whatever advantages there might be in perspective, Scotland had as yet derived no benefits from the Revolution. Her nationality was admitted to have been given up at the Union; she was a sharer in all the burdens that England bore; and her commerce being still rather nominal than real, these, though pitiful in amount, affected her very seriously. The consequence was, that a conviction began by degrees to gain ground, that a positive error had been committed in the expulsion of the whole of the direct line. James, it was said, received only his deserts; but had we taken his son into our own keeping, and educated him in sound principles, we should have exhibited a greater degree of

political prudence than was displayed in the adoption of a foreign prince, and the necessary mixing up of this island in all the mazes and entanglements of Continental diplomacy. But when men began to speculate thus, they had already taken a decided step towards positive Jacobitism. It needed only an imprudent act or two on the part of the Government, to blow up the growing discontent into a flame.

While many gentlemen in the Lowlands, originally devoted to the house of Brunswick, found that devotion grow cold under a contemplation of the supposed grievances to which their country was subjected, other and still more direct causes of complaint prepared the fiery Highlanders for almost any enterprize, however desperate. When the disarming act, already referred to, was carried into effect, several independent companies were raised for the purpose of preserving order, and maintaining public peace throughout the Highlands.

Into these, six in number, the sons of tacksmen and the higher order of tenantry were induced to enter, in consequence of an assurance solemnly given, that they should never be required to serve beyond the borders of their own country ; and during a space of nearly fourteen years, the pledge thus voluntarily tendered, suffered no violation. Even when embodied as a regiment,—a change in their condition which occurred in 1739—the Black Watch, or Reicudan Du, continued still to exercise their functions within the Highland line ; nor had it entered into the contemplation of any individual connected with them, that a more general service would ever be required at their hands. But the state of his Continental affairs, as it had already induced the sovereign to draw more freely than was agreeable upon the pecuniary resources of his English subjects, so it led him to overlook engagements entered into with his Highland soldiery, and to carry them beyond their recognized province.

In the spring of 1743, the Black Watch, being assembled at Perth, were ordered to march upon London, ostensibly for the purpose of being reviewed by the King in person ; in reality, that they might be rendered disposable for active operations in Flanders.

It is not our province to enter into any inquiries as to the policy of this step, nor yet to detail the consequences which resulted from it. Enough is done when we remind the reader, that the Black Watch performed their march ; that the King, without waiting to review the troops, whom he had on this single pretext brought from their homes, set sail for the Continent ; and that the Highlanders, misled in part by mischievous incendiaries, in part indignant at the deceit passed upon them, broke up from their quarters at Hounslow without leave, and endeavoured to make the best of their way back to the mountains. They were pursued, surrounded, and compelled to surrender ; and while two or three suffered death

as deserters, the remainder were drafted into different corps, and dispersed all over the world.

It were, perhaps, going too far were we to affirm, that the men composing this magnificent corps, were all cordially attached to the reigning family. Probably the case was not so, though care might be, and doubtless was taken, to select the officers from among gentlemen of whose political principles no doubt could be entertained ; but the very fact of their carrying arms in King George's name, at a moment when the rest of their countrymen were prohibited from doing so, ought of itself to have rendered the Government cautious how they dealt with them. Of this, indeed, ample proof was given ; for as soon as intelligence reached the North of the species of treatment which the Black Watch had received, the indignation of their countrymen was roused to the most alarming degree. " Where was the advantage of loyalty over its opposite ? " " The very men to whom the King was indebted for

the continuance of his authority in the Highlands had been shipped off like criminals to the Plantations, after they were foully deceived into committing themselves within the power of their hereditary enemies." "It was a national insult—a public wrong, which all men of all opinions were bound to avenge." "Scotland had been treated as a conquered province, and the best of her sons as serfs."

Ever on the watch to take advantage of events as they occurred, the agents of the exiled family became more and more busy from day to day. The most exaggerated reports were circulated touching the injustice put both upon the English and Scottish people by their Hanoverian master. He was represented as wantonly sacrificing the lives of his British troops in every action; as preferring his Germans to all places of honour and profit about his person; as keeping up a large army of foreigners for the purpose of establishing an absolute monarchy in England. In each house

of Parliament, moreover, a strong party was formed, if not unfriendly to the person of the reigning monarch, undeniably dissatisfied with the measures pursued by his Government. Of that fact ample use was made—indeed, it became by degrees a doubtful matter, even on the score of self-interest, whether those had not chosen the winning side, by whom the cause of the Stuarts was adopted.

While the elements of a powerful faction were thus arranging themselves at home, France openly espoused the cause of James, and made ostentatious preparations for the conquest of Great Britain. Troops were mustered in Picardy; they embarked, and the fleet put to sea, while the young Chevalier Charles Edward established himself in Paris for the purpose of following up the blow, so soon as it should be struck: but the fortunes of the House of Hanover prevailed, and the foreign expedition dispersed, without effecting anything. Though bitterly disappointed, the

Jacobites were far from losing heart at this failure. Happily, they had as yet made no open movement, by which means both their persons and their property were secure; and hence, though compelled to restrict themselves to the old system of secret intrigue, they contrived to keep the hopes of their party from sinking, by exaggerated representations of their strength even then, and assurances of admirable arrangements in progress for the future.

Among the most devoted and confidential agents of the party, there was none who surpassed Parson Neil, either in intelligence or in zeal. After lying close, as the phrase went, during the heat of the day, till the memory of former treasons had grown faint, Neil took the field again with fresh alacrity on the first appearance of a change; and being generally known and universally trusted among the leaders of the Jacobite faction, he found frequent opportunities of doing the cause good service. At a period when the slightest act of indivi-

dual indiscretion might have brought ruin on hundreds of the oldest and best families in the kingdom, the presence of a man, towards whom there was no necessity for exercising reserve—who could carry from point to point, without the hazard attending written despatches, the outlines of plans, and the views and wishes of different parties—who was known to possess in an extraordinary degree the qualities of prudence and caution—who could be trusted with a secret, and left to use his knowledge according as circumstances might require: the presence of such a man at such a moment could not fail to be felt as peculiarly advantageous by a body of persons that staked fortune and life itself on the chances of overturning the established Government. The current of our history has not led us to refer to the frequent excursions in which Parson Neil, during two or three years previous to the removal of Allan to the Lowlands, had indulged; but when we state here, that a very considerable

portion of his time was spent upon the road, the reader will be at no loss in surmising to what ends his journeys were directed.

One principal purpose to which the Parson's talents were applied, was to keep up a frequent and friendly correspondence between the staunch old Jacobite chiefs, and those converts to cavalier opinions, whom passing events rendered more and more numerous every day. This was a matter of peculiar delicacy, for it did not always happen, that recent agreements wiped out the remembrance of ancient antipathies, while the prejudices originating in differences distinct from those affecting the civil government of the country, proved in various instances extremely difficult to control. Of the original Jacobites, for example, almost all were either Roman Catholics, or Episcopalians. The former, indeed, scarcely affected to anticipate the re-establishment of their church ; but the latter looked upon the restoration of Episcopacy as inseparable from that

of the exiled family ; indeed, with them, the phrases Whig and Presbyterian were synonymous, and equally applied as terms of contempt. Now of the men who began to swell the ranks of the disaffected, subsequently to the adoption of the impolitic measures alluded to above, almost all were members of the Presbyterian church. It required a great deal of management so to mediate between these parties, as that grounds of disunion should be avoided ; and in nothing was the Parson's tact more conspicuously shown, than in the adjustment of that delicate point. Nevertheless, he did adjust it to the perfect satisfaction of all concerned. Willing, in common with the majority of his brethren, to sacrifice, should necessity require, the temporal interests of his order, he took care to repress, both by precept and example, the exaggerated zeal of the laity attached to his communion ; while he satisfied their rivals, that neither by him nor by the rest of the body, would an attempt be

made to disturb the order of religion in the country, as it had been settled at the Revolution.

Among other influential persons whom the current of events had recently brought over, was the individual to whom the reader has already been introduced ; first, as rendering service to the travellers in their hour of need, and latterly, as dismissing Allan with his credentials to Edinburgh. Descended from a Presbyterian stock, and educated in strict adherence to Revolution principles, Lawrence Blair, of Blairlogie, had carried his zeal in the cause of the reigning family as far as most men ; having taken the field in 1715, under the Duke of Argyle, and maintained a troop of horse during the campaign at his own expense. In the house of Blairlogie, however, as in many others, there were differences of political creed ; for it chanced that while one brother bore arms in defence of George the Second, another wielded his broadsword in the

ranks of the Earl of Mar. This was at the time a matter of deep regret to the laird, who lamented it the more because Æneas's apostasy originated in a cause scarcely less offensive in his eyes than the act of apostasy itself. Æneas, an accomplished and gay young barrister, had formed an attachment to Miss Janet Menzies; of whom also the reader has already heard something, and who, about five-and-twenty years prior to the date when this narrative commenced, reigned one of the leading toasts of the Scottish metropolis. Now the Menzies's were all devoted to the exiled dynasty. They were connected, moreover, by ties of blood, with many of the leading families on that side of the question, and claimed kindred, not remotely, with the arch-traitor Norman Mac Diarmid himself. Nevertheless, neither the remonstrances of a really generous brother, nor the prejudices early instilled into him, rendered Æneas proof against the allurements of the young lady's charms; and to

become the lover of a fair Jacobite and a convert to her principles was, at the period of which we are now writing, one and the same thing. Miss Janet Menzies plighted her troth to the young advocate as soon as he agreed to assume the white cockade, and she sent him forth to win her hand by perilling his own life in a contest which to all, except the enthusiastic, appeared desperate.

The trial was made, and failed, and Æneas Blair, with many other gentlemen who had thrown in their lot with the adventure, became a fugitive and proscribed. His brother earnestly solicited a pardon, and pleaded his own merits in extenuation of the errors of a mere youth; but his plea was totally disregarded, and during some months the young man was indebted to the fearless devotion of his mistress for the means of subsistence. Concealed in a cave in the side of a rock, she visited him daily from that dwelling which gave shelter to Parson Neil and his pupil after

their flight from Stirling; conveying to him his food in her own hands, and risking more than life—reputation, in his defence. But all her care and tenderness availed not. The fiery and restless spirit of Æneas could not brook this protracted imprisonment. Of his brother's exertions he was not unaware, he anticipated from them a favourable result, and in an evil hour he quitted that concealment which had so long shielded him from the vengeance of the law. He was arrested in the house of Blairlogie itself; and being conveyed to Edinburgh, was, within the space of one week, tried, condemned, and executed as a traitor.

We are not required to describe the effect which this occurrence produced on the situation and prospects of the young man's betrothed bride. The terms in which she alluded to the events of "the fifteen," after twenty years had in some degree softened down the

recollection of them, may serve to point out how they operated at the moment ; but of the influence which that impolitic deed had in giving a new current to the principles of the laird, it is necessary to say something. Blair-logie loved his brother with much more than a brother's love. They were all that remained of their race, and Æneas being several years his junior, had been treated by him from his infancy rather as a son than a brother. Nor had the course which Æneas adopted in politics thrown the slightest chill over that affection ; for though he deplored the error, he ceased not to think of the culprit himself as of a boy misled by passion alone. Under these circumstances, but one result might be expected to follow the execution of so bloody a sentence. Lawrence Blair never forgave it. For a time, indeed, he adhered to his Whig principles, or rather deceived himself into a belief that he did so ; but he now became a

rigid and severe critic of every act which the Government performed, both in its dealings with individuals and with Scotland. Nor was this all. The blandishments by which she had originally misled his brother were all forgotten, and he thought of Janet Menzies only as the beloved and faithful friend, who sheltered Æneas in his hour of distress, and now mourned over him broken-hearted.

These sentiments on his part soon led to the commencement of an intercourse which gradually ripened into friendship. He became a frequent visitor at Caldham, a circumstance which excited neither suspicion nor surprise in the neighbourhood, because all men were aware of the particular attractions that drew him there; and he found more than one opportunity materially to serve a family, which had sacrificed much of its property to a sense of mistaken duty. The results may be stated in few words. A contemplation of the de-

voted loyalty of his friends, and the admiration which it was calculated to excite, wrought strongly, though imperceptibly, on a mind soured by a recollection of personal wrongs, and prepared it for that total change of feeling and principle which a few gross blunders on the part of the minister wrought out. The passing of the excise laws shook the loyalty of Blairlogie—the massacre of the Black Watch threw it to the ground ; and he became in the end a zealous though a secret Jacobite, prepared to run all hazards for the purpose of effecting a restoration. Nor were his services less important to the cause than those of any other individual attached to it. His change of sentiment being wholly unsuspected, even by the most furious of his Whig neighbours, the disinclination which he displayed to take again a prominent part in politics was attributed, naturally enough, to the recollection of his brother's fate alone. The consequence was,

that he not only carried on his own intrigues in comparative security, but proved the means of delivering many a suspected Jacobite from the dangers of too rigid an examination.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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